

A N
E S S A Y,
EXPLAINING
JESUS'S TRUE MEANING
IN HIS
P A R A B L E S;

From the OCCASION of his speaking, and the
APPLICATION of them.

*I will open my Mouth in a Parable : I will utter dark
Sayings of old : which we have heard and known and
our Fathers have told us. DAVID.*

By WILLIAM ASHDOWNE.

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M D C C L X X X;

ERRATA:

Page 16	line 22	<i>after forgiveness add when</i>
17	11	<i>erase now</i>
	18	<i>for times read time</i>
	30	<i>for should read would</i>
33	15	<i>for me read men</i>
33	12	<i>for in read from</i>
35	14	<i>after had read and</i>
41	8	<i>erase athen</i>
46	9	<i>after religious add exist</i>
66	11	<i>for inform read reform</i>
68	14	<i>erase at, after aim</i>
81	29	<i>read explication and application</i>
82	7	<i>for in read of</i>
94	5	<i>erase not</i>
96	15	<i>for for read but.</i>



INTRO.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the following pages I propose to represent the original and genuine meaning of our Lord, in the parables he spake, as they are recorded by the Evangelists. To which purpose, as far as I am able, I shall endeavour to explain and illustrate the primary occasion, as well as the special view, he had in delivering them; which the sacred writer has not failed in general to relate, in connection with the parable itself. Pursuing this most natural method, will effectually ascertain his true meaning in each parable. Also, at the same time, we shall particularly advert to the application he makes of it to those to whom it is addressed, which will much assist us herein. And without pursuing this method, it is great odds but we miss his true meaning, and represent only our own, which, for want of closely attending to these rules, only has led men into strange mistakes in their interpretation of them. Had commentators impartially pursued this method alone, no doubt but the Speaker's true meaning in them would have been represented. This would have prevented those many wild and arbitrary interpretations, which have been given of them by
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expositors and others, which have not only betrayed their own ignorance, but also spoiled the natural beauty and simplicity of the parable itself, and injured the meaning of the Speaker. Also it would have prevented that ill-grounded opinion of many, who believe and pertinaciously maintain that there is a natural and spiritual meaning or meanings in a parable, than which nothing can well be more groundless and contrary to the plain and simple meaning contained in each of them. By a spiritual meaning in a parable is intended the proof or illustration of that doctrine or tenet contained or comprehended in it, which men fondly espouse, but which is no part of the Speaker's intention in it. Nay, too often, foreign from it, if not repugnant to it. And this is occasioned frequently by the mere sound of words in the parable; or else owing to an interpretation of it received from education, and improved by after crude thoughts upon it. Thus to instance in one parable only, viz. that of the Father and his two sons. How often is the Father explained to represent God, and the spendthrift Son a sinner; or, as some will have it, that of the Gentiles. Whereas, neither of these senses are what the Speaker intended, and therefore are wholly to be placed to the account of the interpreter, and by him

him called the spiritual meaning of the parable. The indulging which fond conceit has given being to and propagated an endless variety in the supposed signification of a parable, according to the different hypothesis each one has embraced, and is willing thereby to illustrate and defend. Whereas it is presumed it will fully appear in the following pages, that our Lord had only one plain end and design in them, expressed with great simplicity, and adapted immediately to the persons to whom he addressed himself.

To apply a parable, or any one part of it, by way of accommodation to any one subject, tho' not the Speaker's intention, may be done without any real impropriety, provided the genuine meaning of the Speaker be first truly stated. But such an accommodation ought never to be made of a parable which represents that to be his intention which is not, because his design in it may thereby be greatly perverted and misapplied in support of opinions and doctrines of men's invention, he never intended; by which means the ignorant and unthinking are impressed with erroneous, and sometimes pernicious notions, both as it respects the wisdom of the Speaker and the real meaning of the parable. Thus in that of the Father and his two sons; by explaining

explaining the Father, that Jesus intended his own Father, and the spendthrift son a sinner, and his pardon and acceptance of him upon repentance only, has occasioned an objection to that part of it, not easily answered; because thereby the Speaker excludes his own mediatorial office, through which alone, the scripture invariably declares the sinner is forgiven and accepted with God. So likewise in the parable of the master of the vineyard, who hired at different times in the day labourers into it, which being explained that the Speaker designed to represent his own proceedings in judging men at the last day, has involved the parable in great difficulties and raised objections to the equity of the judge; because therein he is supposed to give to every one an equal reward, though the time of labouring of some, and consequently their labour, is greater than others, at which those who were first hired complain. But these objections would never have existed, had the Speaker's intention been truly explained, as arising from, and illustrated by the context, which relates the occasion of his speaking it, and the end he had in view, and the persons to whom he addressed it.

PARABLES

EXPLAINED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

PAGE

- 1 *Of the children of the bride-chamber fasting*
- 2 *Of living or fountain water*
- 4 *Of the wayward disposition of children to one another*
- 6 *Of the creditor and his two debtors*
- 9 *Of the stronger man's entering an house and spoiling the goods of another*
- 10 *Of seeds sown in different kinds of ground*
- 15 *Of kingdom of God compared to grain of mustard seed*
- 17 *Of ditto compared to leaven*
Of the candle not put under a bushel
- 18 *Of seed sown in the ground, and its growing men know not how*
- 20 *Of treasure hid in a field*
Of a net cast into the sea and gathering different kinds of fishes
- 21 *Of what defileth not and what defileth a man*
- 26 *Christ the bread that came from heaven*
- 31 *Of the firmament foretelling the weather as his miracles and doctrine the times*
- 33 *Apostles faith compared to a grain of mustard seed*
- 34 *Of the lost sheep*
- 39 *Of the unrelenting servant towards his fellow servant*
- 40 *Of rivers of living water flowing out of disciples belly*
- 41 *Of the shepherd and his sheep*
- 45 *Of the man who fell among thieves*
- 46 *Of the man who borrowed three loaves*
- 48 *Of a lighted candle*
- 51 *Of the rich man's pulling down his barns and building greater*
- 53 *Of waiting for the Lord returning from the wedding*
Of the faithful and wise steward appointed over the Lord's household
- 55 *The clouds and winds forerunning signs of the weather as Christ's miracles, &c. were of the times of the Messiah*
- 56 *Of the debtor going to be had before the magistrate*
- 57 *Of*

- 57 Of the fig-trees planted in a vineyard
 58 Of the masters shutting the door against those who
 wanted admittance
 60 Of not sitting at the highest seats at a wedding
 62 Of the man who bade many to supper, and but few
 accepted the invitation
 63 Of counting the cost in building an house, and going
 unprepared to war
 65 Of salt
 67 Of the parable of the lost sheep, piece of money, and
 the spendthrift son
 74 Of the unjust steward wasting his master's goods
 75 Of the rich man and Lazarus
 77 Of the servant plowing and after waiting on his
 master
 81 Of the unjust judge
 82 Two men went up to the temple to pray, a pharisee
 and a publican
 84 Of a nobleman who went into a far country to re-
 ceive for himself a kingdom and to return
 86 Of the householder hiring labourers into his vineyard
 89 Of a grain of wheat falling into the ground and
 dying
 95 Of the dutiful and undutiful sons
 98 Of the householder planting a vineyard and letting it
 out to husbandmen
 100 Of a King who made a marriage for his son
 105 Of the thief coming in the night when the good man
 of the house least expected him
 Of the Lord making one of his servants steward over
 his household
 106 Of the five wise and five foolish virgins
 108 Of a man travelling into a far country and leaving
 talents to each servant during his absence
 112 Of Jesus being a vine and his apostles the branches

E S S A Y, &c.

THE first parable we will explain, is that of the children of the bride-chamber fasting, and the two following ones: Mark ii. 19, 22. Luke v. 33, 34, 35. Matth. ix. 14, 17. At verse the eighteenth we are told, that the disciples of John, and the Pharisees, asked Jesus why his disciples did not fast as well as they. Upon which he answers them, that their fasting while he was with them, would be as great an inconsistency, as persons fasting at a wedding; that being a time of all others, in which the guests do not use to fast, whatever they may do when the bridegroom leaves them, or they go from him. But, says he, the time will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away, and then shall they fast in those days. By the bridegroom he most certainly intends himself; as John iii. 29. he adds, that their fasting while he was with them, would

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likewise

likewise be as great a contradiction, as for a piece of new cloth sewed to an old garment, which would make the rent worse; or the putting new wine into old bottles (i. e. leathern, such as were then in use) which would burst and spill the liquor.

If, therefore, the disciples of the Pharisees and John did fast, it was not then a suitable time for his disciples to do the same, and therefore he should not now give them any directions concerning it. When he, the bridegroom, should be taken from them, then they should fast. It was therefore as consistent, that his disciples should not fast while he was with them, as it was for those at a wedding, while the bridegroom was there, &c.

In this view of the parable we plainly see the occasion of its being spoken, the persons to whom it was addressed, and the ultimate and sole end Jesus had in speaking it. What directions he gave the apostles afterwards concerning fasting, or in what manner, or on what occasions they observed them, doth not appear from the New Testament.

The next parable we will state, is that of the living (i. e. fountain) water Jesus would give to men. John iv. 14.

That which occasioned him to adopt the figure in his parable, is obvious in the context, viz. the well of water on which he sat, and the woman coming to draw at it, and his asking her to give him some of it to drink, and her reply, that she wondered that he being a Jew should ask water of her being a Samaritan, as they had no dealings with one another. Jesus upon that tells her, had she known who he was, she would have

have asked him, and he would have given her living water. She understanding him to mean natural water, saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, from whence then hast thou that living water, i. e. fountain water; art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well. To which he replied, whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.—What that water was which he would give, is plain from the context, viz. the gospel, or word of God, which he taught the woman and the rest of the Samaritans, many of whom believed on him for the saying of the woman, verses 28, 29, 30, which testified, he told me all that ever I did; and many more believed because of his own word, and said unto the woman, now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. He continued with them two days teaching.

From the evangelists, it appears rather usual for Jesus to frame his figurative language from the occurring occasion that offered itself, as will be seen in many instances, as we pass on in explaining his parables.

By water, therefore, Jesus means his doctrine, which those that receive into their hearts and obey it, should lead them to the enjoyment of eternal life. Some persons have most arbitrarily, and without any regard to the context, supposed that by water, Jesus means the holy spirit; which sense of the word, such imagine, is supported by other texts of scripture, where it

is represented under the term water. But, admitting it proved ever so plainly, that it is the meaning of the word in other texts, they will not prove it means so here, as there is nothing in the context that countenances such an interpretation of it; and there are many other reasons which might be given why it cannot here be so understood.

The next parable we will attend to, is related Matth. xi. 16—19, concerning the wayward disposition of children towards one another.

That which gave occasion for Jesus's speaking it, was John Baptist, who was then in prison, (see the cause of it, chap. xiv. 3—12.) sending two of his disciples to ask him, art thou he that should come, or look we (i. e. should we) look for another (Messias). Jesus, instead of entering into any disputation with them on the subject of their enquiry, works miracles before them, and then directs them to return and tell their master what they saw and heard, adding, as an application of the proofs he then gave them, that he was the person they looked for, and that they need not look for another, saying, blessed is he that shall not be offended in me. When John's disciples were departed with the message he gave them to deliver to their master, he interrogates with the people present concerning their opinion of John, assuring them, that he was a very great prophet, and the fore-runner of himself, and that all the prophets prophesied of the Messiah, until John, who is the Elias that was to come; and then, as usual, adds the application, saying, he that hath ears to hear let him hear. Upon this the parable is introduced.

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The manner of life of John the Baptist, alluded to by Jesus, verse 18, and the cause why the Jews say he hath a devil, seems to be expressed in the following words. He was clothed in camels hair, (i. e. the skin) a leathern girdle about his loins, his meat locusts and wild honey; his being in the deserts till his shewing unto Israel, i. e. the kingdom of God was at hand, and his often fasting and praying.—From these peculiarities of dress, manner of life, &c. so different from men in common, even of the priestly order, of which he was, the people say of him he hath a devil. What they mean by it, perhaps, is not clearly and fully to be ascertained. Jesus, on the contrary, came neither eating nor drinking, i. e. not out of the usual way of living, but had free intercourse with publicans and sinners, as well as with the rest of the Jews, of him they say, behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. See Luke v. 27—30.

We here see, that the things objected to John, as deficiencies in his conduct, and which Jesus in general avoided, by acting an opposite part, are now objected to him also, for manifesting in his behaviour amongst the people. So difficult was it to give them satisfaction, when they were disposed to be captious. To illustrate his meaning, as usual, without speaking out plainly, he said, whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation, i. e. you and other such captious discontented persons, and to what, i. e. to whom, are they like? They are like children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, saying, we have piped unto you and ye have not danced, we have mourned to you and ye have

not wept, or lamented. When some were disposed to dance and be merry, and promote it in their play-fellows, by piping to them, then they would mourn and weep, act the direct opposite part. If at that, or any other time, they mourned to their associates that they might weep or lament, then they would act the contrary part, i. e. dance and be merry. This is the kind of conduct you are chargeable with, in censuring John and me; of him, because he came neither eating nor drinking, you say, he hath a devil; and of me, because I come eating and drinking, ye say I am a gluttonous man, &c. Jesus adds, as his own judgment upon his conduct and that of John Baptist, that wisdom is justified of all her children; that is, those who thought favourably of him and me, and have embraced the gospel, will justify us both in the conduct that you, who are prejudiced against, condemn.

The next parable we may consider, is recorded Luke vii. 41, 42, of the creditor and his two debtors. The occasion of Jesus speaking, it is mentioned verse 36, &c. He was invited by one of the Pharisees to eat bread with him: as they were at meat, behold a woman in the city, (i. e. Nain) which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind (as he reclined on the couch, the usual posture at meals, John xiii. 23, 25. xxi. 20.) weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment. Now when the Pharisee saw it, he spake within himself (not caring to speak out his

his thoughts) saying, this man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner. It is here plain that whatever was the particular character of the woman as a sinner, it was very bad, verse 47, as he looked upon the familiarity Jesus permitted her to take, that it was a diminution of his own, if he were a prophet as he permitted it; he rather draws this conclusion, that he was not a genuine one. It was therefore a matter of some consequence to the Pharisee, and perhaps to others who might be invited, verse 49, as on another occasion, chap. xiv. 1, 7. To obviate this objection, Jesus therefore answered and said to his private thoughts, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee; and he, not suspecting what it was, saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both: tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? So plain a case he was at no loss to reply to, little thinking the use Jesus intended to make of it, in what he was going to do and say to this great sinner. Accordingly, without reserve or equivocation, he answered and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. To which he said, thou hast rightly judged. Then to apply his concession to the purpose he intended, he turned to the woman, who was behind him, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, to apply the parable as I attended, I say unto thee, her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; i. e. she will love me much for it; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. I have paraphrased it, she will love much. For, according as it is expressed in the text, it represents her loving much as the cause of her being forgiven, which is contrary, not only to the several parts of the parable, which represents the love of the debtor to follow upon the creditor's forgiving the debtor, and not as the cause of it, but also the order in which Jesus addressed himself both to Simon and the woman; for there is not the least hint given that Jesus had forgiven her sins before he said to Simon, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; or that on that account she loved Jesus manifested in what is related of her. Jesus now addressing the woman, immediately saith unto her, thy sins are forgiven.— This authoritative absolution of so great a sinner, by Simon and those who sat at meat with him, was judged to be so far from proving that he was a true prophet, the contrary to which had been suggested in Simon's thoughts at least, that they began to say within themselves, like as Simeon did at first, who is this that forgiveth sins? *Math. ix. 1—6.*—Jesus, without giving any answer to their thoughts, as he had to Simon's, only repeated his absolution, saying to

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the woman, in different words, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.

What a fine and yet severe reflection was here passed upon his host and the company. First, neither had applied to him for forgiveness, nor obtained it of him, though they had so fair an opportunity, owing to their unreasonable prejudices against him. Secondly, this woman's faith in him was a means of obtaining it herself and going away in peace, while their unbelief and infidelity in him had debarred them from obtaining so great a blessing at his hands. Thus did the greatest preacher take every accidental opportunity to instruct men into the kingdom of God, as they were able to bear it.

The next parable we will explain is recorded Matth. xii. 29. Luke xi. 21, 22. of the stronger man entering into an house and spoiling the goods of the possessor. The occasion of Jesus's speaking, it was the reflection that some of the people, who attended on him when he cast out a demon, made upon him, who said, he casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief, or prince of the demons. But he knowing their thoughts, said unto them, it was plain he did not do as they accused him, because he dispossessed him of his hold, and drove him out, and thereby in part destroyed his kingdom and power, and therefore a plain proof he was not in league with him; besides, the doing such miracles was in vindication, and for the promotion of a religion, that in every part of it was most directly and evidently calculated to destroy utterly his kingdom and power amongst men; a farther proof, therefore, that he did not act by the power, or in concert with the chief
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of the demons. But, saith he, if I with the finger of God cast out demons, (i. e. by the finger of God I do cast out demons) no doubt, or it is past doubt, the kingdom of God, not of Satan, is come unto you. Farther to illustrate what I intend, when a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils: that is, while Satan had not me as his competitor and superior, he kept possession of men, but when I, who am stronger than he, came, I took from him his armour wherein he trusted, and dispossessed him; a plain and strong proof, that I act not, in concert with him or by his power, but by a power that is greater, and in opposition to his, and as such am destroying his kingdom. See Math. x. 25.

With what plain and forcible, yet inoffensive arguments, did Jesus put to silence his most inveterate enemies!

Another parable Jesus spake, is that of the sower, who sowed his seed into different kinds of soil, and consequently the product was according thereto. Matthew xiii. 3—8. Mark. v. 1, &c. Luke viii. 4, &c.

Previous to the explaining this and the following parables Jesus spake at this time to the people, it is proper to attend to what was the state of mind, at least of part of them, as is to be collected from the foregoing chapters, to which they are connected, as one continued discourse, or at least with little interruption, contained in Matthew and Mark. And we find there were some of them who looked upon him,

him, on account of the miracles he wrought, to be the Messiah; these he charged not to make him known. Others, from his curing the man on the sabbath day, just at, or before this time, sought how they might destroy him. There were others who asked him to shew them those signs they looked for as characteristical of the Messiah, and then they would believe in him. Farther, there were some of the scribes and pharisees so prejudiced against him, at seeing him cast out a demon, that they said, he casteth out demons by Beelzebub the prince of demons, to whom he freely replied. To men of such different and opposite opinions of him, and whose prejudices ran so high, it was expedient that he should, as on other similar occasions, wrap up his meaning in figurative language, as their minds were not disposed to receive and profit by his instruction in plain words, but would have perverted and abused it. For as he saith to them, they seeing, see not, and hearing, hear not, neither do they understand. Their hearts were waxed gross, and their ears dull of hearing, and their eyes they had closed, lest at any time they should see, &c. Viewing, therefore, the state of mind of his audience, we shall be better able to discern the propriety and suitability of the several parables, as adapted to the time and season in which they were delivered.

The parable of the sower Jesus himself explained to his disciples, when he said to them, hear ye, therefore, the parable of the sower: When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, or the devil, and catcheth away

away that which was sown in his heart; (see chap. xii. 38—45.) this is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, by and by he is offended.—He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful, (Matt. xix. 16—22.) But he that receiveth the seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth some an hundred fold, and some sixty, some thirty.

In this representation of the reception of the word amongst men, so as to answer its primitive design, there are but a small proportion to whom it will prove a real blessing, to those to whom it will not, but the contrary; and after a like manner, Jesus describes the little success of the gospel in these parables following, Luke xiv. 16—24. Matthew xxii. 1—14. Luke xiii 14.

The application Jesus made to the people upon speaking the above parable, is, who hath ears to hear, let him hear. Mark iv. 24. Luke viii. 18. Upon this the disciples came, and said unto him, why speakest thou unto them in parables, (see those in the foregoing chapter, spoke either the same day, or a very little time before.) He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it

is not given; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath; i. e. you and other, my genuine disciples, who with an honest and good heart have received the gospel, shall have farther revelations of it made to you in due time; but those who, like the highway, where the seed of word has been sown, and who have not made a good use of the little instruction they have had by it, shall be taken away from them, as unworthy of it, Matt. xxv. 29. Luke xiv. 24. As the people in general were not inclined to receive his word, he saith, therefore speak I unto them in parables, because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophesy of Eſaiah, which saith, by hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive. And then assigns the true cause of this, viz. for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. This is the character of the people in general, and the true cause why they will not and do not understand what I say to them; but blessed are your eyes, for they see, (i. e. you are willingly disposed to see and understand; that our Lord doth not mean, that they saw what he intended in the parable is plain, because they asked him to explain it to them) and your ears, for they hear. For, verily, I say unto you, that many prophets and
righteous

righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, i. e. which at times I have made known to you, concerning the gospel of the kingdom, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

From a close inspection into the history of Jesus's ministry, it seems that one cause of the character of the Jews, which he expressed verses 13, 14 15, in a quotation from Isaiah, arose from his not answering their expectation concerning his reigning over them on the throne of his father David, and the influence that disappointment had on them to prevent the good effect of his miracles and doctrine on their minds, in reforming their principles and conduct, which were very corrupt. Agreeable hereto, we are informed, John xii. 37, &c. But though Jesus had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him, and then he quotes this same prophesy: on Paul's conversation with many Jews at Rome, whither he was carried prisoner, to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and the prophets, from morning till evening, and some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken the words which the Holy Ghost spake, by Isaias the prophet, unto our fathers, saying, &c. See also Rom. xi. 8. In this last text it respects their not believing, that justification could be obtained by observing the rites of their law, and their not seeing it was to be had by Jesus Christ alone.

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Another parable Jesus spake at that time, is recorded verses 24—30, of a man sowing good seed in his field, and tares, i. e. noxious weeds growing up with them. And which, when the multitude were gone away, his disciples asked him to explain to them, which he did in the words following: he that soweth the good seed, is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth in the Kingdom of their Father. And then he adds, as usual, the application of the parable, saying, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Another parable, is that of the kingdom of heaven being compared to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof, verses 21, 22. See Luke xiii. 18, 19.

Our Saviour's meaning is well expressed by Dr. Clarke. Thus the gospel of Christ, at its first appearing, seems small and mean, received only by a few in comparison with the Jewish nation, but it time in shall spread over all the earth,

earth, and the doctrine which the Jews now despise and reject, shall be embraced and flourish among all the nations of the Gentiles.— That the explication here given of the increase and spread of the gospel from a very small beginning, is just, will appear from his intention in speaking the same parable on two other occasions. One is, the disciples having failed in casting out a demon, for want of faith equal to that work, and he being brought to him to cure, he saith to the disciples, verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it should remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you; i. e. when your faith increases from its present smallness or weakness, to its proper strength, which it may in due time, you shall be able to perform such and greater miracles, John xiv. 12. The other occasion was his having enjoined on his disciples, what they thought an exceeding hard command, concerning forgiveness, they said to him Lord increase our faith. To which he replied, if ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, be thou plucked up by the roots, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you.— Luke xvii. 5, 6. i. e. When your faith in me and my doctrine and resolution to obey it, shall from its present small and imperfect state, arrive to greater strength and perfection, which it will in due time, you will not discern that very great difficulty in obeying this precept as it now appears but you shall be able to observe it literally.

Another

Another parable Jesus spake, after the foregoing, is contained in verse 33. Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. Luke xiii. 20, 21. The meaning of Jesus in this parable, I apprehend, is similar with the preceding, and is truly expressed in the words of Dr. Clarke. Thus the religion of Christ, which now is in its beginning or infant state, as now taught by me amongst the Jews, shall, by the power and evidence of truth, accompanied with miracles, spread itself in time through all the nations of the world.— Or in Jesus's words, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Another parable Jesus propounded at this times, is recorded in Mark iv. 21, 22. Luke viii. 16, 17, 18. And he said unto the people attending him, is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret but that it should come abroad. The application is, if any man hath ears to hear, let him hear.—Jesus's meaning is this, that did he intentionally conceal his meaning from them in what he said, so that they could not receive any benefit from it, he should act as inconsistent and irrational a part, as a man, who having lighted a candle to give light to all that were present, instead of putting it on a candlestick, put it under a bushel, or a bed, thereby frustrating the very end for which it was lighted. For the truths of the gospel,

which he was commissioned to deliver, as the teacher of men, however they had been kept secret and hid from men in times past, the time is come that they should now be made known by me. See Matthew xiii. 3, 5. Whosoever, therefore, that hears them with a mind disposed to be instructed by me, will receive the instruction intended in divulging them abroad. He added, by way of caution and instruction, take heed what you hear, or how ye hear, for with what measure you meet, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear, more shall be given.—The ground of the caution is this, that if they slighted and abused the means of salvation he now offered them, they should be dealt with after a like manner, by having returned them according to their conduct; but those that heard and embraced, with an honest and good heart, what he taught them, more of the revelation of the gospel should be given in due time: for he that hath improved his present means of instruction, more shall be given; and on the contrary, he that hath not, but despised and refused them, from him shall be taken, even that which he hath, or seemeth to have. Compare Matt. xxvi. 29. Luke xix. 26.

To which Jesus subjoins the following parable, Mark iv. 26—29. as an explication or illustration of the foregoing, saying, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth of herself, first the blade, after that the ear, after that the full corn in the ear; but when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth

putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Christ's meaning in the parable is this, that all the care which belongs to the man, is, to sow his seed; but all his after-attention, supposing he rises night and day to inspect the growth of it, will have no effect upon the gradual appearances it makes therein, till it arrives to its natural perfection, the earth, &c. does that in its spontaneous influence upon it, wholly imperceptible to his eye, and out of the reach of his power to effect; when it is come to its maturity, his remaining business is to put in the sickle, and house it. So the gospel which I preach, whether you, to whom I am speaking, receive and embrace it, or refuse and reject it, yet as it is sown by me, it will, by the power of God, grow and come to its designed perfection in this world; and when it has done growing, and arrives to that maturity or completion, an end will be put to the whole dispensation, as the harvest time of the seed now sown, as the seed of the word.

Concerning the parables, which Jesus spake to the people, it is said, with many such parables spake he unto them, as they were able to bear it; but without a parable spake he not unto them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet David, Psalm. lxxviii 2. saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret since the foundation of the world. Matth. xiii.

34, 35.

After Jesus had delivered all his parables to the people, which he saw meet at that time, and sent the multitude away, to whom he addressed them, he landed and went into the house; and

his disciples came unto him, saying, declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field, which when he had done, he saith unto them again, or to renew my teaching by parables to you, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. Similar with his meaning in the parable, he adds, Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he hath found one of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.—Verses 44, 45, 46.

His meaning in the parables, as spoken immediately to his disciples, is evidently this: You who have found the invaluable blessings of the gospel, and with joy received and are in possession of them, have not failed to dispose of all your worldly possessions, that you might purchase and keep a treasure of such inestimable value. See Mark i. 16, 17, 18. Luke v. 10, 11. Matt. xix. 27, 28, 29. Luke xiv. 33.

He adds another parable to them, verses 47, 48, saying: Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, (to some of them this was a parable in their own way of business) and gathered of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. His meaning in it is near a-kin to that of the parable of the tares he had just before delivered and explained, and therefore he explains it after a like manner, by saying: So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among

among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. How suitable were such reiterated representations of the final condition of unbelievers to them, upon what he said to impress upon their minds a due sense of the inestimable worth of securing that rich gem they had purchased in leaving all they had, and following him. As they had not understood some of the preceding parables, but had requested he would explain them, he asks them: Have ye understood all these things, i. e. the parables I have delivered to you since we have been in the house? They say unto him, yea Lord. Then said he unto them, therefore every scribe which is instructed into the kingdom of heaven, is like an householder which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. The special employment of a scribe was to attain the most comprehensive and particular knowledge of the law of Moses and the prophets, that they might be able to teach it to others, as a special part of their profession or business; they therefore brought out of their stock of knowledge, whatever might instruct and edify others. So you, my disciples, having had the advantage of my instruction into the things concerning the kingdom of God, will likewise in due time, when you shall be called to it, be able to produce it all for the instruction and edification of men.

Another parable Jesus spake, is related Matt. xv. 11. Mark vii. 15. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. The occasion of Jesus's expressing himself thus, is mentioned in the beginning of the

chapter, and it was this. His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, which his inveterate enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, object to him openly before the people, that they might prejudice their minds against him, as they also, as well as themselves, observed that and the other traditions of the elders. On which occasion he severely, though justly replies to them, that it was, like many other parts of their observances, only one of their own traditions, and no command of God in his law; and therefore that his disciples had not transgressed the law of God, only one of their insignificant traditions. But farther, he tells them that *they* did worse than invent traditions; for by observing some of them, they set aside some of the real and positive commands of God to them in his law. The instance he mentions is this, God said by Moses, honour thy father and thy mother, and whosoever cursed father or mother, let him die the death. That one part of honouring father and mother, if the child's circumstances admit of it, is to maintain them, or at least in part: but contrary to the true spirit and meaning of this law, ye teach, if a man shall say to his father or mother, *it is corban*, that is to say, a gift devoted to religious uses, such as you, and not the law of God, hath appointed, by whatsoever thou (i. e. his father or mother) mightest have been profited by me in your maintenance, and honour not his father and mother, he shall be free, i. e. exempt from supporting them; for ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother. Thus making the word, or command of God in this instance without effect, through the tradition

tion which ye have declared, and many such like things do ye. Jesus having, in this unlooked for manner, turned the tables upon them, in not only vindicating the conduct of his disciples, but taking off the effect of the reflection cast on himself through their conduct; and also the prejudice on the minds of the people, his enemies intended to fix there, and shewn that his accusers alone were breakers of the law of God; he spiritedly retorts upon them, pointing out their true principle and conduct, saying, ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of me. Jesus having thus, from facts in their doctrine and practice, with irresistible force, and in the most inoffensive manner, put to silence his most implacable enemies, that he might make the most advantage of it, by impressing the minds of the people with a just apprehension what a set of teachers they venerated and implicitly obeyed, he called the multitude, or all the people to him, and said, hearken unto me every one of you, and not to such teachers who pervert your minds and lead you astray from the true meaning of God's commands, and understand; there is nothing from without a man that entereth into him can defile him, but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man: and then, as usual, adds the application, saying, if any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. Our Saviour's meaning is, not that a Jew eating or drinking what the law hath forbidden, could

not defile the man in the eye of the law, but that eating or drinking that which by their own traditions they had forbidden, as that of eating with unwashen hands, &c. could not defile him, and that because the law of God had not prohibited it. That this is his genuine and only meaning, will appear indisputable from his own explication of the parable to his disciples, who not understanding it, when they went into the house from the people, asked him, what was his meaning in it? To whom he answered, by way of reproof for their dulness, saying; are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him, because it entereth not into his heart, &c? That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man; for from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, &c. all these evil things come from within, and defile the man, but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man.

I think no one, who attentively reads the conversation, which Jesus at times had with the Scribes and Pharisees, and his freedom in pointing out their true character, but must think it highly probable at least, that the vices there enumerated, he well knew were justly chargeable on those he now conversed with, and that he embraced that opportunity in a less offensive way, than towards the close of his ministry, to point out to the people a true picture of their religious guides, both in principle and conduct, thereby not only to represent them in their proper colours, but also to counterbalance the unfavourable impression they intended to fix on him

him through the sides of his disciples. Thus Jesus himself pursued the excellent advice he gave his apostles, in the like task they in due time were to engage in, in instructing and reforming the principles and conduct of a bigoted and wicked world, viz. to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

What wisdom and dexterity of conduct, like as on other occasions shone forth in his treatment of his incurable enemies, and their behaviour herein explains what it was which blinded their eyes and hardened their heart against all his remonstrances and reproofs. In the above explanation as confirmed and illustrated by Christ's interpretation of it, we see how exceeding ill-grounded is the application of it, as an allowance to eat and drink what men please, without defiling themselves vindicating what they do in it by these words of Jesus. Equally inconsistent and contrary to his true intention have these words been urged as an allowance to eat blood and things strangled as prohibited in the decree, Acts xv. Whereas it is indisputably certain, the words have not the least relation to either; and therefore cannot, without violence done them, be so applied.

At another time and occasion, as Luke xi. 37, &c. Jesus was asked by a Pharisee to dine with him, which he accepted of, and went and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it he marvelled that he had not first washed his hands before dinner. Whether he spake openly of it to his guests, doth not clearly appear, however, as he knew what was in man, and needed not that any man should inform him, he said to him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside

side of the cup and platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness: ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also: but rather give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you, &c. Jesus was just and severe on the Pharisees and Lawyers at this time, as may be seen in the following verses, That as he said these things unto them, they began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things, laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth that they might accuse him.

The next parable we may take notice of, is his calling himself the bread of God that came down from heaven, John vi. 33. From verse 5, &c. we are informed, Jesus fed about five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fishes. After which he went over the sea of Capernaum without any boat, which some of those people seemed to have discerned, as there was no other boat on the shore, except that wherein his disciples were gone over, and he went not with them. Partly astonished at this uncommon miracle, and desirous to be fed again after a like manner as before, they followed him as fast and as soon as they could. When they come with wonder to see him on that side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, whence, i. e. how or by what means, camest thou hither. Without noticing what they said, he replied to the secret motive, or at least one of them, that led them thither, which indeed was a matter of much greater consequence for them to attend to and correct, saying, Verily, verily I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles,

cles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. And then adds a most suitable lesson of instruction to them, saying, Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed. They understanding him to mean not natural meat, as the woman of Samaria did of natural water, but that he intended by it his doctrine, saying unto him, What shall we do that we may work the works of God. He in plain language tells them, saying, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They understanding him to mean himself; and not believing that the miracles he had worked were a real proof to them that he was the Messiah, because they did not appear to them to be the fore-runners of his ascending the throne of his father David, the central point in which the expectation of the Jews concerning the Messiah, wholly terminated.—Consonant with this notion of the Messiah, and the insufficiency of the proofs in these miracles to evince that he was the person, they ask him, What sign shewest thou then that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work, i. e. thou hast miraculously come over the sea, and fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes; but if you are the Messiah, you are to be like unto, nay greater than Moses; but what you have now performed doth not prove you are so great a person as he was, for he fed the whole camp of Israel with bread from heaven, and quails for forty years. See chap. ix. 29.

To prove the contrary to what they insinuated of his inferiority of character as one sent of God,
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to that of Moses, he allows what they said, i. e. that he had in that manner supported the natural life of the Israelites with bread; but he, the bread of God, now come down from heaven, actually gives, not a natural but a spiritual life, such an one as they had not received; and not to the Jews only, but even to the world, a life of unspeakably more importance than that which Moses only supported, not gave, and to a more numerous people than the camp of Israel. Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my father giveth you that bread from heaven. That Jesus intended this contrast, seems undeniably plain from his own words, verses 48, 49, 50, when he said, I am the bread of life; your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread of life which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if a man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Jesus having given them to understand, he was greater than Moses, having a more valuable life to give, even to the world in general, than that which Moses only supported to the Israelites, he saith, The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not. Our Lord's meaning, when stript of the figure

figure of bread and drink, of hunger and thirst, is expressed in his own plain language to Nicodemus, God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

We have already observed from the discourse Jesus had with the woman of Samaria, that he frequently frames his terms of expression from the occurrence that led him to speak. So here he had fed the people with bread and flesh, and the ground of the conversation or dispute between him and some of them, being about Moses's feeding the Israelites with bread and quails, he adopts the figurative expressions of bread and flesh as representatives of himself and his doctrine, by which he gives a spiritual life unto the world in general, as well as to the Jews.

It was upon this ground Jesus plainly gave them to understand that he was greatly superior to Moses in his character, as one sent of God, whatever they might judge of him. He having only supported the natural life of their predecessors; whereas he actually gives life to the world, and also supports it, i. e. a life they were not before possessed of. In this contrasted light of Jesus's character with that of Moses's, it places it in a most conspicuous and advantageous point of light, and contains a very strong argument, why they should desire to be fed with that bread which came down from heaven, and which Moses gave them not. His miracles, though they did not prove to the Jews that he was to reign upon the temporal throne of his father David; yet they evinced that he was that bread which came down from heaven.

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When Jesus's true meaning in the parable is thus justly stated, from the true occasion of his speaking, it immediately appears how exceeding groundless is the doctrine of transubstantiation, and what a violent and shameful perversion of his intention in speaking. Also, it equally appears, that the words of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, have not the very least relation to his last supper, and consequently ought not to be applied to that service, as expressing a mystical meaning or representation of it.

I will add Mr. Locke's observation of the occasion and reason why our Saviour at that time wrapt up what he said to the people that followed him in such dark and mystical parables. These, (saith he) whom he spoke to, were of those who the day before, verses 14, 15, would by force have made him a king, and therefore 'tis no wonder that he should speak to them of himself and his kingdom and subjects, in obscure and mystical terms, and such as should not offend those who looked for nothing but the grandeur of a temporal kingdom in this world, and the protection and prosperity they had promised themselves under it. The hopes of such a kingdom, now that they had found a man that did miracles, and therefore concluded to be the deliverer they expected, had the day before almost drawn them into an open insurrection, and involved our Saviour in it. This he thought fit to put a stop to, they still following him 'tis like with the same design; and therefore, tho' he here speaks to them of his kingdom, it was in a way that so plainly baulked their expectation, and shocked them, that when they found themselves

themselves disappointed of those vain hopes, and that he talked of their eating his flesh and drinking his blood, that they might have life, the Jews said, verse 52, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? And many, even of his disciples said, it was a hard saying, who can bear it? And so were scandalized in him and forsook him, verse 60, 66. But what the true meaning of this discourse of our Saviour was, the confession of Peter, who understood it better, and answered for the rest of the apostles, shews, when Jesus asked him, verse 67, will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, i. e. thou teachest us the way to eternal life, and accordingly we believe, and are sure that thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God. This was the eating his flesh and drinking his blood, whereby those who did so had eternal life. *Reasonableness of Christianity*, page 88, 89.

The next parable we may consider, is related Matth. xvi. 2, 3. Mark viii. 12, concerning the firmament as prognosticks of the weather, and his miracles and doctrine of the then times.—The occasion of his speaking it was, the Pharisees and Sadducees came tempting him, or questioning him, seeking of him a sign from heaven. What they mean by a sign from heaven, is this, that he would take such steps as should make it appear to them that he intended to ascend the throne of his father David, and reign over them, delivering them from all their enemies, and thereby free them from the Roman power and its disagreeable effects. For that he had shewed them signs from heaven, in the miracles he had wrought,

wrought, is indisputable, and to which he appealed as proofs, that God had sent him ; but they see nothing in those signs that led to, or would end in, his advancement to regal power. The outward appearance of their asking him, was to satisfy themselves, that he was the person they looked for ; but they believing he was not the Messiah, and being willing if possible to injure him in the esteem he had with the people, or to accuse him to those in power, or both, they asked him the question tempting him ; herein consisted the hypocrisy and wickedness he accused them of, which he discerning, sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, O ye hypocrites, why doth this generation seek after a sign, i. e. such kind of signs as they expect, when none of that nature will be given them. What he means that there should no other sign be given them, but only his lying in the grave three days and three nights, seems to be this, that there would be performed no miracle of the like kind, which in its effects would equally demonstrate who he was, and the times, or produce such conviction of it amongst them. See John viii. 28.

Our Saviour's meaning in the parable is this : that as they formed their judgment what the weather would be another day, by the fore-running appearance of it in the sky, which he mentions ; so if they were consistent in judging by outward appearances, as it respected him and his doctrine, they ought on a similar foundation, to judge of them whether they did not describe him and his doctrine as from God, or that his miracles and doctrine were plain prognosticks of the times of the Messiah, and that he
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was the person whom they so much and generally expected at that period.

A similar instance of the Scribes and Pharisees tempting him, and their hypocrisy in it, and his accusing them of it, as in this case is recorded Mark xii. 43, &c. Luke xx. 20, &c.

Another parable which Jesus spake, is related by Matt. xvii. 20, concerning the apostles faith being compared to a grain of mustard seed.—The occasion of his speaking it was this, some of the disciples had attempted but failed in casting out a demon in a child, upon which the parent brought him to Jesus, mentioning that circumstance. Then Jesus answering, said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you; how long shall I suffer you, bring him hither to me. After Jesus had expostulated with, and reprov'd his disciples, and cured the lad, and separated from the people, the disciples ask him, saying, Why could we not cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief, or want of that degree of faith requisite to the work; for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you. And then, somewhat to excuse what had passed, he tells them, Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting, Matt. xxi. 21, 22. Our Lord's meaning in the parable is this, that if their faith in future, in working miracles, increased in a proportion equal with that of the mustard tree, from the small seed from whence it grew, they should be able to perform that, and every other

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kind of miracle necessary to their character, as his servants and apostles.

Another parable Jesus spake, is that of the man who lost one of his hundred sheep, and found it again, Matt. xviii. 12, 13. On his debating with his disciples concerning who should be the greatest in his kingdom; to shew them how little thoughts they ought to have of aspiring to such greatness, he took a little child in his arms and said unto them, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, or he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

By comparing the Evangelists, the thread of the narration, previous to, and what gave rise to Jesus's speaking the parable, is as followeth, Upon his curing the lad who had the demon, which the apostles had attempted to cast out, but had failed in it, the people were deeply affected with wonder at the mighty power of God, which attended him in it; and though it is not mentioned that they, with the apostles, were led to have the like kind of opinion of him, as those had whom he fed with five loaves and two fishes; that is, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world, whom they were going to take and make, or proclaim, him king. Though, I say, it is not related, they had the same opinion of him, or were equally inclined to take him by force to make a king; yet from what Jesus said to the apostles, Luke ix. 44, &c. and their conferring upon the subject, who should be the greatest in his kingdom,

kindom, I think it is highly probable, that the apostles' minds were affected on that occasion with like thoughts of him. When Jesus had cured the lad, he said to his disciples, Let these sayings I am now going to offer to you, sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. A little while before this, when Jesus took Peter, James and John, up into a mountain, and was transfigured before them, when they were informed that Jesus should suffer at the hands of the Jews, like as John Baptist had, they should tell no man what they had seen and heard; and that Moses and Elias, who then appeared to them, spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, but they questioned one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. So here, on the above occasion of Jesus's telling them the same thing, they were exceeding sorry. They understood not that saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not, and they were afraid to ask him. By these expressions I think it is plain, that they had some apprehension of what he intended, but did not fully understand him; for if they were wholly ignorant of his intention, how could they be sorry at what he said, or afraid to ask him what he meant by them. The imperfect apprehension they had of his intention, as militating against their fond hopes and wishes of advancement to the highest honours and emoluments in his kingdom, I suppose, made them particularly advert to what he said, hoping, however, that their thoughts of his meaning might not be the true one. After Jesus had departed

from the place where he had cast out the demon, he passeth through Galilee, in his way to Capernaum, in going which journey, the disciples embraced the opportunity, when a little absent from their master, to talk over things that related to his temporal kingdom, and particularly who of them should be the greatest in it. See Matt. xx. 20, &c. Mark x. 35, &c.— These thoughts of their own advancement in it, were so diametrically opposite to the nature of his kingdom, and the department they were to possess in it, and the temper of mind that would best qualify them for it, that when they were come to Capernaum, to the house where they used to reside, Jesus, with his usual tenderness to their fond prejudices, asks them, what he knew well before, i. e. what they had been disputing about by the way as they come along. Matthew relates it, that they asked Jesus, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Without in the least deciding upon their question, or shewing them that they had no just grounds upon which to build any such expectations in his kingdom, as they fondly promised themselves in it, of setting on his right hand and on his left, he takes a little child and sets it down amongst them, as a fit emblem of that disposition of mind he would have them possess, that is, they should be as much divested of all thoughts of emoluments and pre-eminence in a temporal kingdom of his, as was that little child. Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven: on the contrary, whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom

dom of heaven. He then adds, that whosoever receives one such little child, i. e. that is humble like that little child, that believes in him, he takes it as done to himself; and that, on the contrary, whosoever offends (i. e. causes him to forsake Christ) one of them must suffer the punishment due to such a conduct. As to the world, indeed, it was in the nature of things to be expected, that they would offend them, but woe be unto that man also. Their fond hopes of attaining to greatness in his kingdom, and which they were unwilling to give up, and which Jesus figuratively represents by the cutting off the right hand, &c. these, he tells them, must be parted with, because were they gratified in their expectations, it would endanger their everlasting interest, which by being given up, they might secure it, by acting in obedience to the gospel, as his genuine disciples. See the last cited texts. Upon which he gives them this farther caution, why they should not offend one another, by inculcating such false and pernicious notions concerning his kingdom, as to cause them to disbelieve him and forsake him, when they found that their hopes were built upon the sand; with which he joins another reason why they should not act toward one another in that manner, saying, Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven. Another reason is, For the Son of man is come to save that which is lost. Upon which he asks their opinion in the following parable, whether it was not quite similar and illustrative of what he had said, What think ye,

if a man have an hundred sheep and one of them go astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray; and if so be that he find it, verily he rejoiceth more over that sheep than over the ninety and nine that went not astray. Compare Luke xv. 3—7. And then, as usual, adds the application of it, as explanatory of his meaning, saying, Even so it is not the will of your Father, that one of these little ones should perish.—The appellation of little ones, evidently took its rise from the little child in the midst of them. The plain meaning of Jesus in the parable is this: that as he had been the means of saving those little ones, as part of the lost sheep of the House of Israel, in which he much rejoiced, they ought not to frustrate his labours and disappoint him, by causing any of them to disbelieve him, and thereby forsake him, and consequently endanger their everlasting happiness. The original word, which is rendered converted, as in Matthew, is the only text in the New Testament where it is so translated, which properly signifies to turn about, or to change, and wherever it occurs it is so rendered. The conversion, therefore, here intended by Jesus is, that they should change their present state of mind concerning his temporal kingdom, for that of a child who had no such views of it. Those of them, therefore, who were so converted should be the greatest in his kingdom.

The original word here, rendered offended, has a different and also a much stronger meaning than the word offend in our language, and signifies such an offence at Jesus, as leads the person to disbelieve him and forsake him, owing to
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being disappointed in expectations of honours and emoluments in his earthly kingdom. In Rom. ix. 33, xi. 9, it is rendered a stumbling block, i. e. the Jews did not believe in Jesus and obey the gospel, whereby to be justified, because they depended upon obtaining it by observing the rites of the law of Moses. See also 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. Gal. v. 11. What it is to be offended at Christ, may in part be seen in Matt. xxvi. 33, 34, 35, which is to deny him, John xvi. 1.

The next parable we will attend to, is recorded Matt. xviii. 24, of the unrelenting servant towards his fellow-servant, from verses 15—20. Jesus gave his apostles directions how each should conduct himself towards his brother who had offended him. After he had finished them, Peter came to him, saying, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, 'till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven; i. e. you ought always, upon every offence, to forgive him, if you yourself expect to be forgiven of God. And then adds the parable, saying, Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would take an account of his servants, and when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents: but forasmuch as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made: the servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all: then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant

went out and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence, and he laid his hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest : and his fellow servant fell down at his feet and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told their Lord all that was done. Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest me ; shouldest thou not have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee ? And his Lord was wrath, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Upon which Jesus as usual, adds the explication and application of the parable, saying, So likewise shall my Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. His design therefore in the parable, was not to give a direct answer to the question Peter put, how often he was to forgive his brother, as tho' his brother's offences might be so many that he was not obliged to forgive him, but to shew him the indispensable obligation he was under, as his disciple, to forgive him, let his offences be many or few.

The next parable we may consider, is related by the Evangelist John, chap. vii. 37, 38. This was spoken on the feast of tabernacles ; and Dr. Whitby's note on one of the ceremonies used by the Jews on the last day of that feast, whereby to account for Jesus's using the figure of water,

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as expressive of the Holy Spirit, is "Now on that day, say the Jews, they used to compass the altar seven times with branches in their hand, saying some prayers, in which they often repeated the words *hosanna* and *balzilka*, *save now and prosper us*; whence that day was stiled *Hosanna Rabba*, or the great day of the feast Ashen, and, as they add, by the institution of their prophets Haggai and Zechariah; they then fetched water with great joy from the fountain of Shiloah and brought it to their priests, who poured it upon the altar with the wine of their sacrifice, singing the words of the prophet Isaiah, chap. xii. 3. From the water drawn and used in this service, it is probable Jesus borrowed his figurative language of water, and living, that is, fountain water."

The explanation of the parable is supplied by the Evangelist, and is this. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. The particular time alluded to by Jesus, when his figurative prediction began to be fulfilled, is on the day of Pentecost, as Acts i. 4, 5. ii. 1—4, 16, 17, 18. See also chap. x. 44, 45, 46. xi. 15, 16, 17. When Christ was glorified or exalted, alluded to in the text as the time the Holy Spirit was to be given, those that believe, &c. See ii. 32, 33. iii. 13. That to all others who believed, the Holy Ghost was promised and given them, may be seen chap. ii. 38, 39. viii. 14—17. viii. 52. xix. 1—5. 1 Cor. xii. xiv. besides many other texts in the epistles.

Another parable Jesus spake, is that of the shepherd and the sheep. John x. 1—5.

Previous

Previous to explaining the parable, it may be proper to look back to chap. vii. 14—53. viii. ix. in which we find that the day before, and this day, on which it was spoken, Jesus and the Jews had been conferring together upon sundry subjects. Many of the people believed on him, saying, of a truth, this is the prophet we expect should come into the world, on account of his miracles. Others objected to his being that person, saying, shall Christ come out of Galilee; i. e. believing he was born in that part of Judea, saying, hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was. So there was a division among the people because of him. Some said he is a good man; others said, nay, but he deceiveth the people. But the Scribes and Pharisees sought to lay hands on him to kill him, because he had cured the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, about a year before, as chap. v. and they, on new provocations, as they judged, now sought to destroy him, and for that purpose sent their officers to take him, but they were so charmed with what he said, that they disobeyed their orders. During this conversation, Nicodemus, one of the rulers, speaking in favour of Jesus, drew on him the reproof and condemnation of the rest of his pharisaical brethren, who were present, for his ignorance and inadvertence. And Jesus, during the debates, so fully justified his own conduct, and severely reproved and censured them for their acting in opposition to their better judgment concerning him, that he exasperated them to a great degree. The minds of the people being so divided, and his enemies so

so enraged, he saw it best in continuing his discourse with them and the people, to cloath his meaning in figurative language, as by that means he could point out their true character, without their laying hold of his expressions against him, and which might by some be understood as he intended. In the whole, he saw it meet on the occasion, to be as wise as a serpent, and as harmless as a dove, as at other times he had been.

To return to the parable—This parable the people understood not: he therefore explained it to them, saying, Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep, all that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture. The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (See chap. vi. 33, 49, 50, 51.) I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep: but he that is an hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep. [Whoever compares Matt. x. 16, 17, 18. xxiv. 14, with what Jesus saith of the wolf, I think cannot well help concluding, he describes the character of the Scribes, &c. he then conversed with.] I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep and am known of mine, and other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them

them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.

By the sheep, Jesus means, first, the Jews in general, as the lost sheep of the House of Israel, whom he came to seek and to save, and also the Gentiles. I am the door (saith he) by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture. (Here the figure is taken from folding the sheep, and their feeding on grass as their food.) I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Secondly, by sheep, he meaneth the disciples. The sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out, and when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep; as I said unto you, my sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. Our Saviour's meaning, therefore, in the parable, when stripped of the figure, is this; that those of the Jews, to whom he addressed himself, and of the Gentiles, to whom in due time the gospel should be preached, that believed in him and obeyed the gospel, should find acceptance with God, by him, who in a short time would lay down his life for the sins of the world; but if they refused to comply therewith, as he had given them so many clear

clear proofs that God had sent him, they should die in their sins. To those who believed on him, he said, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Another parable which Jesus spake, is recorded Luke x. 30—36, concerning the man who fell among thieves, and was relieved by the good Samaritan only.

The occasion of his speaking it, and his true design appears from the foregoing verses, viz. a lawyer having asked him, what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus propounded to him these two commandments, namely, the love of God and his neighbour. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto him, and who is my neighbour? To shew him who he was, and how he was to manifest his love to him, Jesus answered and said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jerecho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment and wounded him, and departed leaving him half dead, and by chance there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he came at the place, he passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and gave to the host, and said unto him, take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. And then
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asks the lawyer his opinion, who was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves, and he said, He that shewed mercy on him. To which Jesus replies, as an application of his confession, if he would justify himself in his conduct towards his neighbour, Go, and do thou likewise. Hereby he was taught, that a man's being a stranger of another nation, where national prejudices both civil and religious, are no just reasons against being owned as a neighbour and treated as such, being comprehended in the duty of the second commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Probably the lawyer's opinion and practice had been such as was grounded upon the maxim adopted in practice by many of the Jews, and of which he wanted to be satisfied concerning; i. e. that they ought to love their neighbours, but might hate their enemies. The contrary to which Jesus instructs him in the parable, and had taught the Jews in his sermon on the mount. Matt. v. 43—48.

Another parable Jesus spake, is that of the man who went to borrow three loaves of his friend, Luke xi. 5—8. The occasion of it was this: He having been at prayer, when he ceased one of his disciples asked him to teach them to pray, as John Baptist taught his disciples to pray. Upon which he gave them a summary of prayer, saying, when thou prayest say, Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

To shew them that by their perseverance in the practice of prayer, they should be heard and answered, he said unto them, Which of you having a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight and say unto him, friend, lend me three loaves,
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for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is shut, and my children are with me in bed, I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. As usual, Jesus addeth the application and explication of his meaning in the parable saying, I say unto you, Seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Farther to illustrate and recommend the duty of prayer, by their succeeding in obtaining an answer, he adds, If a son shall ask bread of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or, if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, or as in Matt. good things.

We see here, as in some preceding instances, Jesus borrowing his language in the application of the parable from the description there given, i. e. of seeking to the friend and asking him; his knocking at the door, and its being opened to him, after much importunity. The plain meaning of the parable is, that by asking with importunity, he succeeded with his friend; so shall you, my disciples, who with a right frame of mind, pray to God your heavenly Father, be heard and answered in his own appointed

pointed way and time. Our Lord's meaning in the parable, is much the same with that which he delivered under a different similitude, as chap. xviii. 1—8.

Another parable which Jesus spake, is recorded Luke xiii. 33, 34. concerning a candle being not put under a bushel, but on a candlestick. The primary occasion of its being spoken, was the absurd and wicked reflection made upon him by the Scribes and Pharisees, that in his casting out a demon, he did it by Beelzebub the chief or prince of the devils.—After he had, with unanswerable justness confuted so groundless a charge, he directing his discourse, as I judge, principally to those sort of persons, saith, This is an evil generation, they seek a sign, and there shall no sign (such as they look for) be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet, &c. and then tells them that the Queen of the South, and the men of Nineveh should rise up in judgment with that generation, and condemn it; for one came from far to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here; and the other repented at the preaching of Jonas, but you have not heard with due attention what I say to you, nor repented upon my preaching repentance to you, though I am a greater messenger from God than either Jonas or Solomon. And then he added, as in the parable, saying, No man when he hath lighted a candle putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye, therefore when thine eye is single or clear, thy whole body is full of light; but when thine eye

is evil (by loss of sight) thy whole body is full of darkness. The application as usual is, Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no dark part, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light. Our Lord's meaning in the parable is this, That as a candle is lighted for the purpose of giving light to those present, and the natural eye formed to receive light for directing the man by it, so the light which you Scribes and Pharisees receive from me, both by my doctrine and miracles, is that you may walk by it. Your extinguishing, or putting out, or hiding yourselves from that light, is therefore as contradictory to the true ends of its being given, and your being in the light of it, as for a man who lighting a candle, puts it in a secret place, or under a bushel, instead of putting it on a candlestick, that it may give light to all who are present; or the man, who having a good eye, hurts it, or puts out the light of it that he may not see the light. If therefore you retain the light you have from me, it will be sufficient to direct you, but if you cover over and obscure it, though you cannot wholly extinguish it, your principle and conduct will remain in darkness; and then, as on another occasion, he expresses himself, How great is that darkness!

That darkness of their minds which he alludes to, or one of the primary causes of it, arose from his not answering their expectations of ascending the throne of his father David, and reigning over the House of Israel, and those incidental occasions of intercourse between them,

in which he painting out their true principles and conduct, farther displeased them, and blinded their minds; yet the clearness and force of evidence, in proof of his being sent of God, was so convincing, that they could not in their hearts wholly disbelieve him and his doctrine, though outwardly they rejected both. That they did see the light as just noted, seems plain from what Jesus said at another time and occasion, to those sort of persons when he told them, For judgment I am come into this world that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him, and who had invalidated, and if possible would have disproved the miracle he had just worked, in giving sight to the man that was born blind, who had said of Jesus, we know this man is a sinner, &c. when they heard those words, conscious who he intended, said unto him, Are we blind also? To which he replied, If ye were blind, which ye are not, but see, ye then should have no sin, but now ye say, i. e. your words and real judgment is, we see, therefore your sin remaineth; i. e. as you know and believe much more favourably of me, &c. than you appear to have, or are willing to acknowledge, your sin in your contrary conduct thereto is great, and remaineth, and is justly chargeable upon you. Compare Matt. xiii. 13—17. John xii. 37—40.

The parable of the lighted candle is recorded in the following texts, and Jesus's meaning in it is similar with that under consideration, so far as relates to the purposes of a light. Matt. v. 14, 15, 16. Mark iv. 21.

Another

Another parable which Jesus delivered, is that of the rich man pulling down his barns, and building greater to bestow all his increased goods. Luke xii. 16—20. He was led to speak it on account of his being imprudently interrupted by one of the company, while he was preaching to the people, with this impertinent and ill-timed question, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me; (a case perhaps similar with the following, 2 Sam. ix. 7—11. 2 Kings viii. 1—6. See the Law Levit. xxv. 23, &c.) To whom he replied, with a degree of earnestness that implied a reproof, Man, who made me a judge, or divider over you. To improve this accidental occurrence, as was usual, when he could do it with the appearance of advantage; he having plainly denied having any such authority in this case, and without singling out the man, addressed himself to the people in general who then attended him, and said, Take heed and beware of covetousness, (this, if compared with chap. xvi. 1—14. as directed to the same sort of character, will be thought to intend them principally) for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, or, as it may be rendered, for the enjoyment of life doth not depend upon having large possessions. And then he added the parable to illustrate his meaning, as though an instance of it had taken place in real life, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, and he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow all my fruits? And he said, this will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my

fruits and my goods; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided. As usual, Jesus adds the application, saying, So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. As though Jesus had said, This man, who already possesses considerably of the goods of this life, instead of his asking me how he may be rich towards God, that is, find acceptance with him, and be prepared for the happiness of a future state, he, through the great prevalency of a covetous mind, applies to me only concerning how he shall increase his worldly substance, wholly unsolicitous of his soul and its most important concerns, as it relates to a future state; of whom, and all such men, I will describe in the following parable. So is he, that is, this will be the final condition of this man, and all others who are like minded. Jesus then, further to instruct the man and the audience in general upon the subject before him, and to warn them against the destructive consequences of worldly mindedness, addressed himself to his disciples, whose minds were much possessed with the expectations of the emoluments and honours in his approaching kingdom, which they looked for as soon to appear, saying, Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body what ye shall put on, &c. rather seek ye the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. In this address or instruction, he continued to give the

the people, he spake the following parable, verses 36—40, saying, Be ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom their Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and he will come forth and serve them, and if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And then he adds another similitude, further to explain his meaning concerning being ready when their Lord came, saying, And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not suffered his house to be broken through. And then subjoins the application of what he had said in the parables, saying, Be ye also ready, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. If we compare these parables with what is said verse 20, our Lord's meaning in them will appear plain. But God said unto him, the rich man who had laid up treasure for himself, and was not rich towards God, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? Upon Jesus's having finished his address to the apostles, Peter saith to him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us (particularly) or even to all the people? And he answered him, saying, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men servants and the maidens, and to eat and to drink, and to be drunken (see verse 19.) The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware (verse 20.) and will cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. Or, in other words, unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. Our Lord's design in the parable is much the same as in the preceding one, i. e. to shew his disciples the great obligation they were under always to be ready whenever called out of this world, to depart prepared for it. And they, in an especial manner, ought to see their duty herein, and act accordingly, because they were favoured with much greater means of instruction concerning it, than the people in general, and on that account more was required of them, and if they did not observe it greater would be their punishment than that of others. But faith he, do not imagine that believing in me, and obeying the gospel I preach, as the means of your instruction and preparation against your Lord comes, as described to you in the preceding parable,

parable, is an easy task, to go through successfully. No, For I tell you, that the unnatural effects which my preaching and my religion will have upon the minds of corrupt and wicked unbelievers, will be like a ravaging destroying fire. I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled in the opposition even I have met with from the unbelieving Jews. I myself have a baptism to be baptised with, i. e. I am like to be drowned in sorrow and difficulties myself, from the causes I have just mentioned, which will make yours a fiery trial, and how am even I straightened till it be accomplished? What the fire is he intends, as already kindled, he explains by saying, Suppose ye that I am come to send peace on earth? I tell you nay, but rather division; and then he mentions wherein it would consist in verses 32, 33. Upon which he adds this parable—And he said unto the people, when ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, there cometh a shower, and so it is; and when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, there will be heat, and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth: but how is it, that ye do not discern this time? Yea and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right. That is, the opposition and persecution which I have met with, and some of those who have embraced my religion, and the breaches it has made amongst their nearest friends and relations by becoming my disciples, and acting according thereto, are as plain signs of what will further take place as the gospel spreads, and men embrace it, in producing the effects I now just mentioned; as that those signs in the air are

the forerunners of the usual effects of rain and heat, which follow those appearances, Our Saviour hath expressed his meaning as above in the following words: The kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it, or the violent take it by force. Luke xvi, 16. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Matth. xi, 12. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. Luke xiii, 24. xiv, 25—33.

Jesus continued to add, saying, When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way give diligence, that thou mayst be delivered from him, lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, that thou shalt not depart thence till thou hast paid the very last mite. Our Lord's meaning, as appears from the context, is this, although I have represented the difficulties and trials attending believing in me, and obeying the gospel, to be considerably great at present, owing to the perverseness and wickedness of mine, and the gospel's enemies, yet they ought to be encountered with and overcome, whereby to avoid a much greater evil and punishment, which will ensue on those who do not believe in me, and obey the gospel. As, suppose any one of you had contracted a debt you could not pay, and your creditor having you before the magistrate, and he ready to deliver you to the officer, and he going to cast you into prison, to lie there; would you not in such a case make it up with your adversary, though the terms were hard, rather

rather than go to prison to pay the last mite, and you unable to discharge the debt? Why then do ye not likewise see in matters of religion, that it is highly reasonable and necessary for you to repent and reform immediately, and believe in me, while God graciously affords you time and space for it, lest his judgments overtake you, and ye perish irrecoverably. See verses 8 and 9 of the chapter under consideration.

Another parable Jesus spake is recorded chap. xiii, 6—9, of the fig-tree planted in a vineyard, and its being cut down. This parable and the preceding part of this chapter, is a continuation of the discourse we have just taken notice of; and the occasion of his delivering the parable is this: There were present at that time, during the conversation, some (most probably the same Scribes and Pharisees as mentioned chap. xi, 33, 34, who had, and continued to tempt him, that they might have to accuse him) that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Their captious intention was, to draw from him a censure or condemnation of Pilate's cruelty or oppression, which they would not have failed to improve against him to Pilate, or some of his partizans, or to justify his conduct; by which he would have exposed himself to the rage of the people, who it is plain looked upon it as a violation of justice, and a contempt of one part of their law, and who already, by many acts of tyranny he was guilty of in his administration, had rendered himself odious to them. To avoid which ensnaring proposition, he, tho' to his inveterate enemies, gives them a lesson of instruction most worthy of their attention and conformity to,
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when he said, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye, that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Upon this he introduces the parable, saying, A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground. And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. The plain meaning of Jesus is this, that he had attended upon them for a considerable time, and used the properest means to make them bring forth fruit, i. e. to bring them to repentance, and obey the gospel; but with too little effect: and therefore, that means would soon cease, and they continuing unfruitful would be cut down or perish, as he had just told them, and that by the same civil power, and likewise by the future judgment of God. Compare here-with verses 35, 36. xix, 41—44.

Another parable we will attend to is related Luke xiii, 25—29, of the master's shutting the door, and refusing admittance to those who came wanting to come in. The occasion of it was this: As he was journeying towards Jerusalem, and preaching the gospel, he was asked by one a question,

question, of more curiosity than importance to himself or others, and therefore, Jesus in his answer avoided a solution of it, while he taught him what was of much greater moment for him and others to know and practise, whereby both he and they might be saved; and of consequence advises him to strive to enter in at the strait gate, assigning a very forcible reason why he ought to strive, viz. for, or because many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. And he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence you are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I know you not, whence you are; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. Matth. viii, 11, 12. Jesus's application of what he had said is: And behold, there are last which shall be first; and there are first which shall be last. Our Saviour's meaning is this: As you now know me, and hear my doctrine, you possess the means whereby you may be saved; but if you satisfy yourselves with possessing it only, and it don't produce its proper effects in your heart and life, it will most assuredly deceive you and others. If you do improve the means

means in due time, in a proper manner, I shall own you another day, and you shall be saved ; but if otherwise, I shall not know you as a disciple of mine, and consequently you must expect to meet with the punishment due to the unbeliever. There are many, who do not possess equal advantages of the light of the gospel with you, yet by improving what light they have, will stand before you ; and you and others, who enjoy equal opportunities of being saved, and do not properly improve them, will another day be placed behind those, who are not equally favoured with the means of believing in me, and obeying the gospel, as you now enjoy. So great a difference and disproportion will there be in improving the means of being saved, and the contrary.

Another parable Jesus propounded to the people is related Luke xiv, 7—10, of sitting not in the highest seats at a wedding. He having come to Jerusalem, when he spake the last parable, and one day being invited by one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread with him on a sabbath day, he went to his house, who though in a seeming friendly manner he asked to come, was watched, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath day, there being present a man who had a dropsy. So constantly intent were those kind of persons to accuse him to the people, and thereby if possible prejudice their minds against him, and obstruct the success of his ministry. He knowing their evil and malicious intention, asked them, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day ? At which they held their peace, believing it was not, as I apprehend. Upon which he took the man and healed him, and let him go. And then asked

asked their resolution or opinion on this plain case, which he knew they could not deny, saying, Which of you shall have an ass, or an ox fall into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they knowing what they and others would do in such a case, could not answer him again to these things. Matth. xij, 10—13. Jesus, as on some other occasions, turns the tables upon them, accusing them of that spiritual pride and self-superiority he observed in them, in choosing the highest seats, or the chiefest rooms, whereby they might be distinguished from those they looked upon as their inferiors. To which purpose he spake the parable, saying, to those that were bidden, When thou art bidden of a man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him, come and say unto thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. Jesus, as was customary, adds the application, saying, For whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted. See chap. xx, 45, 46. See also his advice to the Pharisee, who invited him, and to the rest of the company, verses 12, 13, 14. Our Lord's intention in the parable, was not so much, if at all, to censure a reasonable and just distinction among them, or in the different ranks amongst men, as that spiritual pride and self-conceit of themselves, which he knew

knew led them there, and which needed his just reproof.

Another parable Jesus delivered to the people is, that of the man who bade many, and but very few accepted the invitation, and is contained in verses 16—24. This was spoken at the same time, and was occasioned by one of the company saying, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. What his opinion was of that kingdom, and what he means by eating bread in it, is not easy to determine. But, I suppose, he intended the same that the Jews, as well as the apostles, then looked for, that would soon appear: but whatever he meant by it, and eating bread in it, Jesus, as usual, frames his language in the parable, from the repast, either dinner or supper, to which he was invited, saying, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready; and they all began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came and shewed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, (Jerusalem, where he then was) and bring hither the poor, and the halt, the maimed, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the

the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men (who refused my invitation) shall taste of my supper.

As though our Lord had said to the man, by what seems to be your opinion of the kingdom of God, and the happiness of the subjects of it, one might conclude you believed, that every one who has the offer of entering into it, would gladly accept it, as a very great blessing, both the rich and the poor; but I assure you, that you are mistaken, as it relates to the kingdom of God, which I preach, as few among the rich enter into it influenced by worldly considerations, and many among the poor are on that account but little inclined to accept the offer of it. But take this very important lesson of advice with you and the rest of the company; that if you refuse the present invitation, the opportunity will soon be ended with you.

To continue his instruction to the people, who still attended him, upon the subject of entering into the kingdom of God, and to shew them, that the obstructions that they might meet with from worldly considerations, in their way to it, ought, and should be removed; he spake the two following parables, verses 28—33. But before he delivered them, he tells them of some of the most capital and trying difficulties they might expect to meet with, and which they must rise superior to; saying, If a man come to me, or, which is the same thing, enter into the kingdom of God, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also; he cannot be my

my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Nay, whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple. See what he farther said upon this subject, Matth. x, 21, 22. xix, 27, 28, 29. Upon this the parables are introduced, saying, For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man begun to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand: or else, while the other is a great way off, he sendeth an embassy of peace. As an application he adds, saying, So likewise whosoever he be of you who now follow me, and would embrace my doctrine, and believe in me, that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple, or eat and drink in the kingdom of God. Here he tells the man, and the rest of the company, that not only men's ground and oxen must be left and forsaken to follow him, but also, that such must, if called to it, hate father, &c. nay, forsake all that they have, yea, and his own life also, to enter into the kingdom of God, or to eat bread in it. Our Lord's meaning in it is this, that if any of you are disposed to enter into the kingdom of God, or to become a disciple of mine, and continue such, so as finally to reap the blessings of it, you must enter upon that course of life with a full expectation

tation of meeting with very trying difficulties on that account, and therefore, with a full purpose of overcoming them, otherwise all your beginning-labour will be wholly fruitless, nay, of real hurt; because you had better have never known the way of truth, than, after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you.

Jesus adds, Salt is good; but if it has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. The application of the whole discourse is: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. His meaning in the last parable of the salt is this: That if the principles of his religion imbibed by those who become his disciples, does not preserve them in their obedience to him under such trials as he had mentioned, there are none that will; and if they lose them, and so have none of its savour in their hearts, they are unworthy to be reckoned by him as his followers. As a matter of great importance, therefore, it was requisite they should hear and understand what he said to them.

On two other occasions, Jesus useth the same figurative language, Matth. v, 13, when speaking to his disciples of what should be their apostolic character, he says, Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. As salt preserves from putrefaction what is salted with it, that is liable to perish without it, and also mends or makes better the land on which it is cast, while it retains its saltness; so they by their doctrine should

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preserve and improve those to whom they preached the gospel, if they received and embraced it; but when it loses its genuine effect upon their minds, the gospel will be as useless to them, as salt is useless that has lost its saltiness, and they shall be cast out, as such salt is, as good for nothing. Jesus, by another figure, compares them to the sun, saying, Ye are the light of the world, i. e. by the doctrine you will preach concerning the kingdom of God, you shall instruct and inform men from their wicked ways to obey its pure principles, and live according thereto. Verse 14.

The other text is Mark ix, 49, 50. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt lose its saltiness, wherewith will you season it? His application is: Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

By comparing the context with Matth. xviii, 1—14, it is plain, that the subject of conversation between the disciples had been, who should be the greatest in his kingdom, interrupted only by John's saying, upon what Jesus had observed, verse 37, that he saw one casting out devils, and as he did not follow them, he had forbid him to do the same again; but Jesus told him, he ought not to have forbid him. The matter debated was, concerning not offending one another, by inculcating the notion and vain expectation of his temporal kingdom; and on being disappointed in their expectation, to disbelieve in him and forsake him. To prevent such a fatal effect on one another, he, in figurative language of the hand and eye being parted

parted with to save the body, or preserve life, told them, that all such fond hopes of a temporal kingdom of his must be relinquished, whereby to continue his genuine disciples. As every sacrifice under the law (Levit. ii, 13,) was to be salted with salt, without which it was not accepted; so you must be salted or seasoned with my instructions, by which you will be accepted of me, and preserved from the danger I have mentioned, of giving or taking offence, and also be accepted of my father in so doing. But if my instructions upon this subject doth not preserve you from causing one another to offend, or taking offence, there are no other instructions that you will have instead of them, or that will or can have the like effect upon you. My final advice and hopes therefore are, that you will have salt in yourselves by imbibing my word, and act accordingly, and then you will be at peace among yourselves, and not offend one another. These three texts, we see, have a similar meaning with each other, and that by salt Jesus intends his word or instructions; and that to be salted, is the embracing and practically applying it to the purposes he intended. But to return.

The next parables, as relating to one and the same occasion, we will take notice of are those contained in chap. xv, and which are a continuation of Jesus's discourse with the same persons, as before observed; namely, the lost sheep, the piece of money, and the undutiful spendthrift son. Previous to explaining which it may not be amiss to look back to chap. xiv, 1, &c. which is the beginning of it, which he had with the Pharisees, and the people. We are there informed, that one of the company at the Pha-

riser's house on the sabbath-day had the dropsy. The Pharisees and Lawyers supposing Jesus would cure him, though on that day, they watched him, that if he did, they might accuse him to the people of breaking the sabbath. But before he cured him, he silenced their mental objection, and thereby prevented their accusing him on that account. They not being able to improve this instance of his conduct against him to the people, that they might prejudice their minds against him equally with themselves, and thereby depreciate his character, and obstruct the influence of his doctrine, which was their uniform aim at, they at this time embraced another occasion for this end; for many publicans and sinners came to hear him, as verse 1, 2, and knowing at a past time he had eat and drank with such persons, they now accuse him of it, saying, He receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

To enter into the special design and end which Jesus had in propounding these parables, we must attend to this accusation, and the design which the speakers had in view, as the ground of them. In this they accuse him of a familiarity with such men, whose company they themselves refrained from, and therefore plainly insinuated, that as he acted a contrary part, if he was a prophet, it was a great reflection upon his character, if not a direct and full proof that he was not a true one.

The most probable time that they allude to is that, which is related Matth. ix, 9—13. Luke v, 27—32. On this occasion they murmured at him, and his disciples also, for eating and drinking with them. His justification of his conduct

conduct to them and the people present, is expressed in the words following: They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye, and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Who the righteous were he intended, we may with great probability gather from Luke xviii, 9—14.

But further; it is highly requisite to have a just idea wherein consists the force or poignancy of the accusation these persons lodged against Jesus, as what gave rise to the parable's being spoken, and in proportion as it was received and admitted by the people, it would prejudice their minds against him, and obstruct the influence of his ministration, which, with their usual malevolence of mind, was wholly aimed at by his accusers. To which purpose we must attend to some texts, in which is related the opinion those persons, particularly amongst the Jews, had of publicans and sinners, and at what distance they kept themselves from them. And there is no one passage in which this is drawn more to the life, than by Jesus himself, in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, Luke xviii, 9—14. See also what is related chap. xix, 2—7. Matth. xi, 19. Luke vii, 37, &c. on the familiarity Jesus admitted the woman, who was a sinner, to take with him; the very objection to his character, mentioned above, is expressed in these words: This man, if he were a prophet, would have known, who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for *she is a sinner*. Therefore, as he admits of it, he cannot

not be a genuine prophet. I will only add Matth. xviii, 17.

Our Lord, who knew what was in man, as on other occasions of their speaking evil of him, was apprized of their full intention at this time, and what effect it might have upon the minds of the people; and therefore, he attempts to justify himself in delivering the three following parables, as illustrative of his own conduct, for which he stood accused, signifying, that the steps he had taken in seeking and finding the lost sheep of the House of Israel, i. e. the publicans and sinners, who were of the seed of Abraham, who had gone astray, was as justifiable as that of the man and woman's seeking and finding the sheep and piece of silver, and as their neighbours rejoiced with them on that occasion, more than of the ninety and nine sheep which went not astray, and the nine pieces of silver, which had not been lost; so he assured them, that though they did not rejoice with him on occasion of his finding the lost sheep of the House of Israel, but, on the contrary, murmured at him on that account, yet the angels in heaven, like the man and woman's neighbours, participated with him in the joy he experienced on that account.

To represent yet farther the nature of his conduct as entirely unexceptionable, and to delineate in yet stronger colours that of his accusers, in their murmuring against him, he tells them, that a father had two sons; to the youngest, upon his desire, he gave him his portion of goods, to act for himself, and after squandering it away in distant parts, reduced to a state of servitude and extreme want, he resolves to re-
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turn to his father's house, acknowledge his past errors, ask to be admitted as a servant only, and not as a son, and in that state share in the plenty of his father's table. Accordingly he returned; but when he came within sight of his father, who saw it was his son, instead of waiting his coming to him, ran to meet him, and embraced him with every mark of parental love; while the son at the same time confessed, with deep accents of sorrow, his past undutifulness and folly, and promised obedience for the future. Before the conclusion of this mutually joyous meeting, his brother came home, and upon being told what had passed of his brother's return, and his father's joyous conduct towards him, instead of joining, like the man and woman's neighbours, and the angels, in the father's, son's, and family's joy, he was angry, and in a murmuring tone, like the Scribes and Pharisees hereby represented, would not go in; upon which, his father, coming out, entreated him to go in, he addressed him in these words: Lo, these many years do I serve thee; but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured his living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. With whom, like Jesus with his accusers, he expostulates the circumstances of the case, and finally tells him, that all he had should be his; but as to his son, it was meet that he and the family, like the neighbours and angels, should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and, like the sheep and piece of money, is found.

Our Saviour's words to Zaccheus, a publican, expresses the purport of these three parables, when he said, This day is salvation come to this

house; for as much as he also (the undutiful spendthrift son) is the son of Abraham. For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost; as was the sheep, the piece of money, and the son. At which Zaccheus received him joyfully—And when the Jews saw it, they all, as in the instance before us, murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. To Zaccheus Jesus said, The Son of Man is come, to seek and to save that which was lost.

From the foregoing interpretation, we may with certainty infer, that the usual explanation given of the last parable by most expositors—that by the undutiful son, Jesus designed to represent the Gentiles; by the father, his Father; and the reception the son met with, that of a sinner's acceptance with God; the angry murmuring brother, the Jews murmuring against the Gentiles being received into the kingdom of God, after Christ's ascension, when they were first admitted into it, are all equally alike wholly foreign from the intention of the speaker, and therefore void of truth, as not in the least comprehended in the true occasion of his speaking the parable, as we have seen.

I may just add, that by the above explication of the parable, one objection some have made to one part of it, is wholly removed; viz. that our Saviour represents God as receiving to his plenary forgiveness a sinner, without the mediation of his Son.

By the above representation of our Lord's primary and only intention in the parable, we see, as on other occasions hath appeared, how exceeding imaginary, and therefore groundless,

less, as well as endless, must all explanations of parables appear, that are not derived from and illustrated by the true occasion of their being delivered, and consequently, their native and genuine beauties and the propriety of them must be wholly lost, whereas in the pristine, which is their only proper dress, they are illustrative of the wisdom and prudence of their author, who said, as well as did, all things well, I will only finally add; it is one thing to apply the parables Jesus spake, in the only view he had in delivering them, and another to accommodate them to cases and subjects widely different from what he intended, which from the mere sound of words, or the explication given of them by expositors, and not attending to the true occasion of their being spoken, may be plausibly done. And this method of treating them, as it is usually managed by scriptural-declainers, may be executed with greater acceptance and applause, than he who states their genuine meaning, and from thence only argues and urges them practically.

The conclusion and application which Jesus leaves with his accusers and the people, was, that if the steps these several persons had taken in seeking and finding what they had lost, and the reciprocal joy it excited in them and those who were their friends, was perfectly natural, and therefore justifiable; and likewise the conduct of the father towards the returned penitent son, they could not but acquit him of having acted reproachable to his prophetic character, in receiving and eating with publicans and sinners, as in doing that he was seeking and finding, and also saving the lost sheep of the House of Israel. At the same time he leaves his representation of
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the angry and murmuring son against his father as a just draught of the principle and conduct of his unjust accusers, to their own reflections upon it, as well as that of the people's.

The next parable we may consider is that of the accused Steward, who having wasted his master's goods was turned out of his employment, Luke xvi, 1—8.

Jesus having justified his conduct in eating with publicans, &c. as stated in the foregoing parables, and thereby prevented any unfavourable impression which otherwise it might have made on the minds of the common people in diminution of his character, as a prophet and teacher sent from God, which the Scribes and Pharisees, his accusers, maliciously intended to fix in them. He, as on some other occasions, though seemingly addressed to his disciples, turns the tables upon them by representing their true principle and conduct, and the consequences of it, in the parable of the unjust steward, who had wasted his master's substance, which he was intrusted with, to use in his service with fidelity, by an unjust appropriation of it to his own use; for which he was turned out of his employment. That it was levelled at those persons, and not at the disciples, to whom he spake, appears plain to me, from verses 14, 15. The unfaithfulness of the steward's conduct is represented verses 9—13, that is, it consisted principally in not applying his master's substance he was intrusted with in acts of charity and beneficence, which he ought to have done in discharging his trust, but instead thereof unfaithfully applying it to his own use, owing to his being the servant of mammon, or the unrighteous

ous mammon, and not as the servant of God. For, saith Jesus, ye cannot serve two masters. As you love the unrighteous mammon more than God, so you serve him: but if you loved God, and were his servants, you would obey him. Upon this severe and just rebuke, the Pharisees, whom he pointed at, heard all these things, and being conscious whom they were aimed at, derided him, instead of resolving to reform what was amiss, according to his excellent instructions. To whom he in pointed language replies, saying, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, i. e. your merely outward religious behaviour, is abomination in the sight of God, i. e. in this light he looks upon you.

On this fresh occasion of shewing their disingenuity towards him, and farther to point out to them what he particularly intended in the unfaithfulness of the steward, and his being turned out of the employ, he spake the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Here we see that the steward or the rich man's wasting his master's goods, or his unfaithfulness, is represented to consist in being clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day; or his receiving his good things in his life's time, and also and principally, in not relieving the necessitous, who laid before his gate for succour, painted out in the instance of Lazarus. The contrary conduct hereto, would have been so far acting as a faithful steward, and making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when he had failed or departed hence, he might have been, like Lazarus, received into everlasting habitations, or Abraham's

ham's bosom : but being herein unfaithful, and also wasting his master's substance in luxury, he was consigned to that place of torment related in the parable, or turned out of his stewardship.

In the conversation that is represented to pass between Abraham and the rich man in torments, there are several things worthy of notice, as directed to the persons he spake to, viz. that though they called Abraham their father, and themselves his children, yet even he confirmed the judgment that had been passed upon the unjust steward, as equitable and just, telling him, as Jesus once did the Jews, that his children are they only who imitate his righteous conduct—Also, they are by this referred to the Scriptures for information, and direction what to do, that they may obtain eternal life, and avoid that place of torment he was brought to. This on some occasions Jesus referred them to, and which no doubt, but here he likewise intended.—Further, Abraham tells the rich man, that if his brethren will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded to seek after eternal life, and avoid the torments he endured, though one rose from the dead to speak to them ; which was verified in that of Jesus's resurrection, who by his apostles spake to them, but notwithstanding, in general they did not believe in him.

See what Jesus saith of the difficulties and dangers attendant on riches, as hindrances to entering into eternal life, Mark x, 24. Also what it is to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, whereby to be received into everlasting habitations, Matth. xxv, 31—46.

Perhaps to the curious discerning reader it may not be deemed altogether groundless to suppose,

pose, that by the case of Lazarus, whose name signifies, Help'd of God, our Lord intended to describe the publicans and sinners, whom the Scribes and Pharisees passed by unobserved, and had complained of his being too familiar with. That however they treated them at present, yet such should be heirs to eternal life, while they who thought themselves the only favourites of heaven, should not only miss of it, but be punished for their unbelief in him. See Luke xviii, 10—13.

Another parable which Jesus delivered is, that of the servant plowing in the field, and when he returned waiting on his own master at meat, before he eat himself. Luke xviii, 7, 8, 9. At verses 1, 2, he had signified, that in the present state of men's minds on various accounts as opposite to each other, it was hardly possible for them to avoid giving and taking offence; but, Wo (saith he) unto that man, by whom the offence cometh. And then addressing himself immediately to his disciples, he tells them, to take heed that they were not herein guilty one towards another. And further, if any one did trespass against another, he that was offended should forgive his brother, even seven times in a day, if he returned, saying, I repent. To them this lesson was not only an unusually strict one, but carried in it so great a difficulty in complying with it fully, that they all joined in their request to their preceptor, saying, Lord increase our faith, i. e. our resolution and fortitude of mind by which we may be able to obey this command, which we cannot at present help looking upon as more than our duty to perform. And no wonder they should judge of it in that light, if they had embraced

embraced the maxim taught by the Jewish guides, that they ought to love their friends, but that they might or were lawfully allowed to hate their enemies. Matth v, 43. To which Jesus saith, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the roots, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you; i. e. when your faith or resolution to obey what I now command you, shall from its present smallness or weakness, like that of a grain of mustard-seed, grow to a strength or firmness proportionate to the size of the tree that comes from that small seed, you shall be able to do this and much more difficult things; than that which I have now commanded you. By what means they were to increase their faith to such a degree, or when it would be afforded them, he did not tell them. However, to shew that what he had now enjoined upon them was not out of, or beyond the line of their duty, as his servants, to perform, he adds another parable, stating it as though it was the case of either of them, and what they would think of it, and do in it. If they approved of the equity of the master's command on his servant, and that the servant in complying had done his duty only, as similar to what he had now enjoined on them, they could not think his injunction unreasonable, or more than their duty to perform. He said, which of you having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will not say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go, sit down to meat? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself

self and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken ; and then after that thou shalt eat and drink ? Doth he thank that servant, because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not, i. e. I believe not. His meaning is this, Would any of you, for such an act of obedience to such a command, though an extra service in a servant of your's, judge you were indebted to him for it ; and therefore, that he had a just claim there-to, because you had no right to command him in that instance ; and therefore you were obliged to thank or reward him for it, as you would one not your servant ; or in such a case thank that servant, because he did the things that were commanded him ? I believe not. Apply your own opinion of such a case to the service I have now enjoined you, though a particular act of obedience to my command, and by you thought hard, and more than your duty to comply with, which, notwithstanding your present opinion of it, is equally your duty to observe, as my servants, with other duties, and that observing them, you are not therefore entitled to any special thanks from me, above what is due to an obedient servant. Our Lord's intention in the parable was, not to make appear whether such a servant was entitled to his master's favour for his ready and punctual obedience to his extra command :—this was indisputable, and what he had not the least intention to determine ; but it was wholly this, whether in such a case as he related, they judged he had done more than his duty, and for which his master was indebted to him thanks or a reward for it, like as he would to one not in his service ; and that the servant had an equal right or claim to it with such a person. He plainly

plainly supposes they would determine in the negative, when he answered for them, I trow not.

If the foregoing explication of our Lord's parable be admitted to be a just one, we may infer with certainty, that his meaning verse 10, hath been, and still is, greatly perverted, when urged to prove that the obedience of Christ's faithful servants to the gospel doth not in the least render them the objects of the divine favour, or on that account intitle them to a reward at his hands. Nay, that from hence they are taught to look upon them as sinful in his sight, confirming their opinion of it from the words of the prophet, who says, We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness as filthy rags. Now whatever truth there may be in this opinion, yet it is certain, it is not in the least determined by our Lord in the text, because it did not come within his design, from the occasion of his speaking the parable to which it inseparably belongs; and therefore, the opinion can never be decided by what he says in that verse; no more than it can be proved from Paul's writings, that men can or cannot be justified by works of moral righteousness, because such an opinion did not make any part of the ground upon which his arguments upon justification are founded, and therefore not to be decided by what he hath said upon that subject. To men fond of depreciating the virtuous and religious principles and conduct of genuine Christians, as not coinciding with their erroneous opinions concerning the nature and intrinsic excellence of virtue, and who are governed more by the sound of words in a text, which they fancy supports their sentiments,

ments, without duly consulting the true meaning of them, it is no marvel that they wrest into their cause every aid.

The next parable we take notice of which Jesus spake is, that of the unjust judge, Luke xviii, 2—5. His design in delivering it was, to engage his disciples and others to a constancy in the practice of prayer. And that which seems to have led him to urge the observance of it was, his having represented the forerunning circumstances of his coming again, as related in the latter part of the foregoing chapter. On a similar occasion he urged this duty, as may be seen Matth. xxiv, 20. Mark xiii, 32, 33. Luke xxi, 36. Compare the context in the two last chapters. Jesus, in the foregoing chapter, having related some of the forerunning signs of his second coming, spake a parable unto his disciples and to the people which attended him, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, *Avenge me of mine adversary.* And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, *Though I fear not God, neither regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her; lest by her continual coming, she weary me.* The application and explication which he makes is this, *Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, tho' he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Our Saviour's meaning is, that if

the unjust judge, destitute of the fear of God, and regard to men, was wrought upon to do justice to this widow, merely by the force of her importunity, they ought to follow her example in prayer, who had much greater encouragement to it; because they addressed their heavenly Father, who in himself was most readily disposed to hear and answer their requests, when it should be best for them. Our Lord's intention herein is much the same as in the parable already explained, Luke xi, 5, &c.

Jesus being upon the subject of prayer, and attended by some of the Pharisees, as chap. xvii, 20, whom he well knew performed it with too great an opinion of their own righteousness, as a ground, if not the only one, upon which they fondly expected to be heard, and answered of God; and also who looked upon the Publicans with a degree of contempt, but who were more acceptable than themselves, spake the following parable, saying, Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. The principle, as well as the manner of praying of these sort of persons, is related by Jesus, Matth. v, 5. xxii, 14. Of their righteousness he saith to them, Ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity, xxiii, 28. Ye are they
which

which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God. Luke xvi, 15.

The Pharisee in his praying having spoke commendably of his own lame services in religion, and passed a contemptuous reflection upon a Publican, Jesus saith, as his judgment upon the case, that the latter went down to his house justified rather than the other, for this reason, viz. because every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Thus reproving the principle and conduct of the Pharisee, who, though he made much greater pretensions to purity of principle and holiness of life than he would allow in the Publican, yet he was not equally accepted in the sight of God. See on another occasion Jesus giving the preference to the Publicans and Sinners, in comparing their conduct with that of the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. xxi, 28—32. Luke vii, 28, 29, 30.

Jesus being at this time on his journey towards Jerusalem, and near Jericho, restored a blind man to his sight, and coming to that place, Zaccheus, a Publican, climbed up into a tree to see him, to whom Jesus said, when he was come down and had entered into his house, This day is salvation come to this house; forasmuch as he also (though a Publican) is the son of Abraham. Some of the people, who had seen him restore sight to the blind man, and which had made a great impression upon their minds, and hearing him say, that salvation was come to that house, interpreted it of the salvation they looked for, which was, that if he was the Mes-

siah, of which they had favourable apprehensions, he would, now he was near Jerusalem, and going thither, assume the throne of his father David, and deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. This seems to be comprehended in what is related chap. xix, 11, and which gave occasion to his speaking the parable in the following verses. And as they heard these things he added (to what he had said, that they might not mistake his meaning) and spake a parable, because he was nigh unto Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. This mistaken opinion of him, and of his temporal kingdom, he at several times had attempted to suppress in the minds of the apostles, and the same thing he now, in a different way, tried with the people, when he said, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return, and he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds: and he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds: and he said likewise unto him, Be thou

also

also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, here is thy pound, which I have laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, taking up that thou laidst not down, and reaping that thou didst not sow: and he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow. Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have received mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds, (and they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds): for I say unto you, That to every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. (Compare Matth. xiii, 12. Mark xv, 25. Luke viii, 18.) But these mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.

Our Lord's design in the parable is principally this, to represent such kind of transactions, and the time they must necessarily take up in the kingdom of heaven, that it could not so soon appear as they expected, but must be at a great distance; and also, that the transactions in it, as it respects the subjects of it, and the great business of the King or Lord, as were very different from those they looked for in that kingdom, they thought would soon appear.

The persons to whom the nobleman committed the pounds, and the several improvements they made of them, I conclude are representative of

Jesus's servants, and the citizens who hated the nobleman are the Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees, who on all occasions had been, and finally proved to be, his particular enemies,

The parable of the talents, though similar with the above, yet, as we shall see, was spoken upon another occasion, and therefore our Lord's intention in delivering it is very different.

Another parable which Jesus spake is, that of the householder, who went at different times in the day to hire labourers into his vineyard, Matth. xx, 1—15.

At verse 16 of the foregoing chapter it is said, Jesus was asked by one, What he must do to inherit eternal life? and one part of his direction being, to sell all that he had, and give to the poor, he went away very sorrowful; for he was very rich. Upon Jesus's reflection upon the very dangerous tendency of trusting in riches, the disciples, who heard it, said, Who then of such can be saved? But he said to them, However with men it is impossible, yet it is not by the blessing of God. Upon which Peter said to him, Behold, according to your direction to the young man, we have not only left all our worldly substance, but also very early in thy ministry followed thee. What shall we have therefore? That is, shall not we on that account be entitled to an higher or superior state to that of other disciples, who have not acted up to such a pitch of self-denial? To whom he replied, that they should sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, i. e. you shall have eternal life, and so also shall others, who believe in me, who have not acted equally up to your conduct.

For

For if any for my sake have left only houses, &c. they likewise shall receive an hundred fold, &c. i. e. they also shall inherit eternal life. Farther to explain and illustrate his meaning, concerning the reward of eternal life to be given to all his disciples, whether they became such sooner or later, or had done more or less in his service, he spake this parable, saying, For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an housholder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard, and when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day (i. e. your reward is settled with you, as chap. xix, 28) he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and he said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you; and they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise; and about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing idle, and he said unto them, Why stand ye here idle all the day? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. (These are the persons with whom no stipulation of reward was particularly made, as verse 29.) So when even was come, the Lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. (So the reward, i. e. eternal life, is represented to be the reward of those, verse 29, as well as those verses 27, 28.) But

when the first came (as verses 27, 28,) they supposed they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, (as is implied verse 27,) These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them (Peter) and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? (verse 28) Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last (verse 29) even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? Jesus's application as before, with some addition, is, So the last shall be (as the) first, and the first (as the) last. For many are called to inherit eternal life, but few obtain it. This I apprehend is his meaning, when he saith, For many are called, but few are chosen.

Let it be noted, that the primary occasion or ground of this conversation was, the enquiry, what was required to obtain eternal life, not what were the different degrees of happiness that constituted that state: this, I apprehend, our Lord throughout has wholly in view, and in what he saith verses 28, 29, he means one and the same thing, that is, eternal life, or, as he expresses it, everlasting life. And that the penny a day is expressive of the same thing, which should be given those alluded to, verse 29, as well as to the apostles, verses 27, 28. Indeed, as we have noted, the apostles seem to expect a greater or somewhat different reward than others, and which seems to be expressed xx, 10, 11, 12; but

but that mistaken opinion of their right, Jesus replies to and rectifies, verses 13, 14, 15. The design of the parable therefore is, to shew the apostles, that their opinion concerning their distinct or superior right to eternal life, to that of other disciples, was not justly grounded; but that they also who obeyed the call of the gospel, though they did not forsake all to follow Jesus, yet continued to labour in his vineyard, should likewise obtain eternal life. In this explication of the parable, it doth by no means appear, our Lord intended to represent, that the reward which will be bestowed upon his servants in a future state shall be equally alike to them all, thereby not discriminating their characters from one another, contrary to what in other texts is plainly set forth, will be the distinction that will then be made between them, who shall differ in degrees of glory, as one star differeth from another in glory. No objection therefore can lie against the parable, as representing that the meanest servant of Christ, and who hath been the shortest time in his service, shall be rewarded equally with those who have been the most eminent, and laboured the longest in his service.

The next parable we may consider is, that of a grain of wheat falling into the ground, springing up, and bringing forth much fruit, John xii, 14. To understand the real occasion which led Jesus to speak it, and the end the person had who asked to see him, which led to it, we must look over some memorable occurrences which led those Greeks to say to the disciples, Sir, we would see Jesus; and here let it be noted, that during his ministry he had been but little at Jerusalem, and therefore did not perform many
miracles

miracles there, partly owing, as I apprehend, to the usage he met with, for curing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, as John v. A very little time before those Greeks, i. e. Hellenist Jews, desired to see him at Bethany, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, he raised Lazarus out of his grave to life, which being looked upon by the Jews as a very extraordinary miracle, it made much talk concerning him, at and near Jerusalem, and many came from thence and round about Bethany, to see him and Lazarus, to be satisfied of the truth of so great a miracle, and to gratify their curiosity to see Lazarus. Nay, so great was the reputation Jesus was in amongst the people, that on that account many believed on him. The whole of which transactions were taken notice of by his enemies the Scribes and Pharisees, that he was become exceeding popular, by engaging the attention of the people to him. Upon their being informed of these things, they met in council and said, What do we? for this man worketh many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. On the same occasion the Pharisees said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him. So great and general was the effect of Jesus's raising Lazarus in his fame amongst the inhabitants of the metropolis. In a very few days after he had performed that miracle, another occurrence happened, which contributed to heighten his character, and spread it in another point of view, namely, as King of Israel, or King of the Jews. This was his riding upon an ass into the city, amidst

amidst his own disciples and a vast multitude of people, both young and old, that set out with him from the Mount of Olives, and that joined him in the way to the city, who took branches of palm trees and spread them in the way, and others their cloaths, saying, with loud voices that rang the air, Hosannah to the Son of David; blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest. And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou at least, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. In this uncommon, yet exceeding popular and distinguished manner, did Jesus enter the city, proclaimed by the eager multitude, King of Israel; at which some of the Pharisees, who were mixed with them, and were highly displeased at what passed in favour of his regal character, said to Jesus, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones should immediately cry out. That which increased his being taken notice of by the multitude was, that soon after he entered the city, he went into the temple of God, and cast
out

out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves. And said unto them, It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. To render his character still more popular, and to take off any ill impression which that act might occasion in their minds, he cured the blind and the lame who came at that time to him in the temple. During which it seems probable, that the people, with the children, continued proclaiming him King of Israel. When the chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosannah to the Son of David, they were sore displeased and said unto him, (a second time concerning the children) Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea, have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise. And when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even-tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve, and there he lodged. Matth. xx, 1, &c. Mark xi, 1, &c. Luke xx, 28, &c.

A little while after these things happened, and the minds of the people continued to be impressed with uncommon apprehensions of so extraordinary a person, especially as the proclaimed King of the Jews came on the passover, when persons from different and distant parts of the Roman empire came, according to the command in the law, to attend at that festival, as John xi, 55. Among others that repaired thither, were some Hellenist Jews, who coming there, no doubt but were soon made acquainted with the
above

above occurrences, and by whom they were occasioned, which raised their curiosity to see a man of such an uncommon character, and so universally caressed and followed by the people, and proclaimed King of Israel. For it is said of some who came out of the country, i. e. Judea, and who no doubt had heard of his fame, if not seen him, and came there at the feast, that before Jesus came up to Jerusalem they sought for him, and spake among themselves as they stood in the temple, What think ye that he will come to the feast? that is, that we may see him. When he came certain Greeks came up to worship at the feast, the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus: to whom he gave this answer. The hour is come, that the Son of Man shall be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth fruit. (See 1 Cor. xv, 35, 36.) His meaning is this, Tell these persons, who expect to see me as the King of Israel, that so far from my being that person, whom the Jews expect to sit on the throne of my father David, that my dissolution is just at hand; for as a grain of wheat, when fallen into the earth, dies; so shall I die, and like that which, after it is dead, springs up and yields a considerable produce; so shall I not continue in the grave, but shall rise again, the effects of which in illustrating and proving my genuine character, and the spread and confirmation of the gospel, will be much greater and more illustrious, than you
see

see at present. And farther, tell these Greeks, that he who loveth his life in preference to believing in me, and obeying the gospel, shall in another world lose it; and he that hateth his life, i. e. is not willing to give it up, as I shall do, if called to it, on account of believing in me, shall keep it unto eternal life. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my father honour. This was the answer they were directed to give those Greeks, who wanted to see him, expecting to see the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord. Jesus's intention in the message he sent to the enquirers, is much like what is contained in the following texts, Matth. x, 22—39. Mark viii, 31—35. Luke ix, 22—25. xviii, 25—33.

I shall here take the liberty to offer what appears to me one reason, if not the only one, why Jesus wrapt up his plain meaning concerning his death in an obscure parable, rather than speak out his meaning plainly, and which it is probable that even the disciples then did not understand, much less those Greeks. And it seems to be this: the disciples, as we have observed, entertained the common expectation with the rest of the Jews, that he would sooner or later assume the royal dignity, in which advancement they expected the highest departments. When therefore Jesus had but very lately admitted and countenanced their proclaiming him King of the Jews with the rest of the multitude, and said, if these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out, there is great reason to believe they then thought the time very near indeed; and therefore had he then in plain words, as at some other

other times, told them, that in a few days he should die, and rise again, it would have been such a thunder-stroke, just at the time when their hopes rose to the highest pitch, that it might have produced very unhappy effects upon their minds, when, soon at least, they needed upon that very account the greatest support and comfort, under the expectation he gave them of his near approaching death, which is one special end he had in view, in conversing with them upon that and other concomitant subjects, as is related chapters xiv, xv, xvi, xvii.

These things, saith he, I have spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

As Jesus had often spoken of his kingdom in such language and forms of expression during his ministry, as rather countenanced the opinion the apostles had of the Messiah's temporal kingdom, though he said it not with a design of strengthening their erroneous opinion of it, but to keep them attached to him during his ministry, as he well knew, that after his resurrection and ascension they would be effectually undeceived, as in fact it appears they were, he plainly saw that their minds could not at that time receive cordially such an account of what would befall them, as he intended in the parable. See in what manner Peter rebuked him once, for telling them, that he must die, and be raised again, Matth. xvi, 21, &c. His condescension in this instance, and in many others, to their weakness and prejudices, is exceeding visible to an attentive eye in surveying the history of his ministry.

Another parable Jesus spake is related by Matth. chap. xxi, 28, 29, 30, of the dutiful and undutiful

undutiful son. Jesus, as we have observed, cleared the temple of all the buyers and sellers, and overthrew the tables on which they transacted their business, telling them it was a den of thieves; but that his Father's house, as a house of prayer, should continue such, and would not suffer any man should carry any vessel through the temple. This uncommon exertion of himself in an house where the Jews, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees, thought they had the greatest authority, joined with what had passed, which has been related, exasperated the latter much against him. When they heard what he said and did, they sought how they might destroy him; for they feared, because all the people were astonished at his doctrine. And they could not find what they might do; for all the people were very attentive to hear him. To avoid their fury, when the people, whom they feared, were gone from him in the evening, he went out of the city. The next morning, when he returned into the temple, still fearing to lay hold of him, as they much wanted to do, the chief Priests and the Elders of the people, came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority dost thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? They probably expected he would say, he did it as the proclaimed King of Israel, and that was his authority; which would have been an answer to their utmost wishes. But Jesus, who well knew their malicious ensnaring intention, gave them no answer by what authority he did those things. But to puzzle and confound them, and to have a fair opportunity to reprove them, for their unbelief and disobedience to John Baptist, whom they believed

believed was a prophet of the Highest, and to shew them that in principle and conduct they were much below even the publicans whom they despised, he answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me (which he well knew they would not, because either they must condemn themselves before the people, or deny John's prophetic character, which would have exposed them to their resentment by being stoned by them) I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves saying, If we shall say from heaven, he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But and if we shall say of men, we fear the people, i. e. of being stoned by them, for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus and said, (not thinking he well knew their thoughts) We cannot tell. And he said, neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Upon this he adds the parable, saying, But what think ye, a certain man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not (this son represents the despised publican) but afterwards he repented and went; and he came to the second and said likewise (this represents those who asked the question) and he answered and said, I Go, sir, and went not. And then asks them, which of them did the will of his father? They (unapprehensive of his applying to themselves what they answered) said unto him, the First. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans (the first son) go into the kingdom of God before you; for

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John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed (i. e. obeyed) him not (the second son) but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And ye, when ye had seen it (Luke iii, 12) repented not afterwards (Matth. iii, 7, &c.) that ye might believe, i. e. obey him. To the same purpose he expresses himself, Luke vii, 28, 29, 30.

In this, as well as in more instances, we may see Jesus, by his superior wisdom, and knowledge of the hearts and true character of his enemies, turn their designs against himself into an opportunity of confuting and condemning themselves before those people, whom they intended to prejudice against him.

Jesus, farther to describe the character of the chief priests, and the consequences of that unbelief and disobedience they had manifested towards John Baptist, which he had just brought them, in their own minds at least, to confess they were really guilty of, and that he might farther delineate their true principle and conduct towards God's servants, particularly John and himself, he added the following parable of the man who let out his vineyard to husbandmen, and the manner after which they treated both his servants and son; Matth. xxi, 33—44. To whom he said, Hear another parable. There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard and hedged it round about, and digged a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen (See Isaiah v, 1, 7,) and went into a far country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat

beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants more than the first, and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But, when the husbandmen saw him, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize on the inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. (Acts vii, 51, 52.) When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? Not yet sensible whom he had in view, they answered him; He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen which shall render him their fruits in their season. Farther to represent to them who he intended by the son, and their usage of him, as a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the house of Israel, and at which they stumbled (see Acts iv, 11. Rom. ix, 33,) he saith, Did ye never read in the scriptures (i. e. did you never understand the true meaning of these words) The stone which the builders (i. e. you) rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. And then, in plain words, without any figure, he tells them the purport of the parable, saying, Therefore I say unto you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, i. e. he that shall treat me and my doctrine in a less envious manner than you do, shall be liable to a lesser degree of punishment; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder,

i. e. you whose designs and conduct towards me is so exceedingly aggravating, that I shall fall on you with great severity of punishment. Conscious in themselves of their melevolent intentions and behaviour towards him, and that nothing but the fear of being stoned by the people, kept them at that time from taking away his life, they saw who he aimed at, in what he said then and before. When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him they feared the people, because they took him for a prophet. Still farther to paint out their true character, and to shew them the future consequences of it, he spake the following parable, chap. xxii, 1, 3, of a King who made a marriage for his son. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain King, which made a marriage for his Son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come (the chief priests and elders, with the Scribes and Pharisees, who said I go, Sir, and went not); again he sent forth other servants (chap. xxi, 34,) saying, Tell them which are bidden, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. But they made light of it and went their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandize, and the remnant took his servants and intreated them spitefully (verse 35, 36,) and slew them. But when the King heard thereof, he was wroth, and he sent his armies (verse 41,) and destroyed those murderers (verse 48) and burnt up their city. Then, faith

saith he, to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy ; Go therefore into the highways (verse 43) and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered all together, as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment, and he was speechless. Then said the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus's explication and application is, For many are called, but few are chosen. His design in the parable seems evidently to be this ; that those chief Priests, &c. with whom he was conversing for temporal considerations, refused the invitation he gave them of believing in him and obeying the Gospel, for which he would in the present time punish their nation ; and that many, who accepted of it, not being prepared to receive the blessings offered in the Gospel, should not obtain them.

A similar parable to this is related, Luke xiv, 16—24, already explained. See also the parable of the tares, Matth. xiii, 36—43.

His enemies perceiving they could not draw from him any thing whereby to accuse him, and yet determined upon pursuing some expedient for that end, being greatly irritated at him for what he said to them and of them before the people, being still impressed with fear of the people, were prevented from laying hold of

him, as they much wished, unless they could draw from him some expressions that would in their opinion make it justifiable to take such a step, and they knowing from experience that all their attempts had proved ineffectual, they sent unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, as spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him into the power and authority of the governor. This was what they had long sought for, that the people might be induced freely to admit of their seizing him, and also that they might have sufficient grounds to accuse and condemn him, the end they invariably aimed at. But this they never obtained, and therefore in the night, when the people had left him, they accomplished their purpose, in laying hands on him, by means of Judas the betrayer. When these persons, who were thought compleatly qualified to ensnare him thro' the thin guise of that hypocrisy they put on, came to him (not apprehending he knew who and what they were) they say to him, Master, we know that thou teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man, for thou regardest not the person of men. (How justly was this said of themselves!) Tell us, therefore, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not! Shall we give, or shall we not. But Jesus perceiving their hypocrisy, wickedness, and craftiness, said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites! Shew me the tribute money. And they brought him a penny; and he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him Cæsar's. Then, said he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and

and unto God the things that are God's. When they heard these words they marvelled, and *they could not take hold of his words before the people*, and then left him, foiled in one of their best laid designs, as they judged, to entrap him, which proved utterly abortive; but his answer and conduct in the affair, tho' it increased their admiration and wonder at it, yet they did not believe in him, but still pursued him.

No sooner had he put to silence his hypocritical and crafty enemies, than he was attacked by the Sadduces with what they thought a very knotty question, which was this; that a woman having had five husbands, all brethren, to know whose wife she should be at the resurrection? not that they believed in a resurrection, for this they denied. He having given such a solution of it as they did not expect, or were prepared to disprove, put *them* to silence also; at which those very men who had tried to entangle and destroy him were pleased that he had put to silence the Sadduces, not out of the least regard to Jesus, but as it gratified their spleen against those with whom they were at variance on account of their differing in opinion upon the subject of the resurrection, as what Jesus said supported and illustrated their opinion of its truth and certainty. (See a like instance, Acts xxiii, 6—9.) Upon this, certain of the Scribes said to him, Master, thou hast well said. So powerfully do mens prejudices operate upon their minds, for what truth does even in matters of infinitely greater consequence, as in the case before us. Upon Jesus's having thus pleased the Pharisees with his answer, one of them still tempting him asked him, Which is the

greatest commandment in the law. To which he gave such an answer that they could take no exception. Upon which, there being many of that sect gathered together, in order in his turn to puzzle them, and to let them see, and also the people, how little they understood, at least some part of the law that predicted himself, he saith unto them, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? They say unto him, the Son of David. He saith unto them, how then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. If David call him Lord, how is he his Son; Seeing themselves also unable to tell him and the people the meaning of the prophecy, and having, in all their attempts to ensnare him, failed of success, nay, had the tables turned upon themselves to their confusion and disreputation, the learned Doctors of the law and teachers of the people, and still awed by his superior wisdom and address, that no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man (from that day forth) ask him any more questions. So compleatly did Jesus triumph over those who thought to have had the like advantage of him Matth. xxii, 15—48. Mark xii, 13—37. Luke xx, 19—44.

When Jesus had put all his enemies present to utter silence, he with great freedom of expression, and in the most pointed manner, laid open the true principle and character that marked out their lives, warning his disciples and others, with great warmth of expression against having any dependence, especially in religious concerns, upon men so abandoned and wicked,

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as may be seen in the last cited chapters and Matth. xxiii.

Another parable which Jesus spake is recorded, Matth. xxiv, 42—52. Know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would not have suffered his house to be broken up. The occasion of his speaking it is this; upon his going out of the Temple, where he left his accusers ashamed and confounded, the disciples came to shew him the buildings of the Temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down, and then describes the forerunning circumstances of those things, and also of his second coming. Upon this the parable is introduced and his special and immediate view in it, as well as his application of it, is expressed in these words to his disciples; Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh. See a similar parable explained, Luke xii, 40.

As the thief came at a time when the good man of the house did not expect him, neither was prepared for such an important event, do not you act after that manner, as it respects my second coming, seeing I have now foretold you I shall come, but not the time when, therefore be ye always ready.

Another parable he spake immediately upon the application of the other, is verses 45, 54. Who then (saith he of you) is a faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household to give them (i. e. the servants) their meat in due season. Blessed is that servant whom

whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But if that servant say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Our Saviour's meaning is this ; That they, as his Apostles, had the highest department in his kingdom in superintending over his servants to feed them with the word of God, and consequently whose trust was greater than that of others, it was especially requisite they should give great attention to discharge their trust with fidelity, both to their Lord and his servants, and that if they failed herein, their punishment would be greater than that of others their Lord's servants. That this is his genuine meaning, see in his own words already considered, Luke xii. 41—48.

Immediately upon his speaking this parable, with much the same design, he added that of the five wise and five foolish virgins, chap. xxv. 1—12. saying, Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom, (i. e. himself, John iii. 29.) and five of them were wise, and five of them were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and

and slept, and at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. His explication and application of the parable is, Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh. See what he saith in a parable similar with this, Luke xii. 35—38, 40.

To an attentive reader of the context, I should suppose, nothing can well be more apparent, than that the parable of the good man of the house, the servants appointed to preside over their fellow servants, and this under consideration, are all spoken with much the same view, as appears from the occasion of them, and the application of each, as contained in the foregoing chapter, verses 44, 50. and xxv. 13. that is, to impress with weight upon the minds of the Apostles, a just apprehension of the uncertainty of the time when he should come again, and the importance of their being prepared for it, by acting agreeable to the instructions which at times he had given them, and should yet farther give them, that so on the one hand they might escape the punishment due to the unfaithful

faithful servant, and on the other hand reap the reward he would confer on the faithful one.

Upon the application of the parable of the ten virgins, he adds that of a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods, chap. xxiv. 14—30. saying, And unto one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, every man according to his ability, and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that received one went and digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money. After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold I have gained five talents more. His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents, behold I have gained two other talents besides them. His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed; And I was afraid, and
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went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo there, thou hast that is thine. His Lord answered, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him and give it unto him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath (improved what he hath) shall be given (more) and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not (improved what he hath) shall be taken away even that which he hath; and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. To this parable he has not, as to the others, added any explication or application of it. But as it stands connected with the preceding, and spoken upon the same occasion, and to the same persons, we cannot but discern his intention to be similar with the foregoing, namely, to urge on them the special obligations they were under to watchfulness during his absence, till he returned, and in that interval of time to see that they improved with care the trust he had and would commit to their charge, as his Apostles, and then when he returned they should receive a reward proportionate to their assiduity and fidelity in his service; but those who acted the contrary part, should meet with a punishment adequate to the nature or degree of their remissness and infidelity. That this is his primary and genuine meaning, see in a like parable spoken by him on another occasion, Luke xix, 11—25. His explication and application is, For I say unto you,
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That to every one that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not even that he hath shall be taken away. But those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before my face. See also Matth. xiii. 12. Mark iv, 24, 25. Luke viii, 18.

Jesus having, in the foregoing parables, mentioned in general terms, things concerning his second coming, and that then his faithful servants should be rewarded according to the improvement they made in his service during his absence, and that the slothful and unfaithful should meet with a punishment equal to the nature and aggravating circumstances of their conduct, proceeds to describe more particularly the manner of his coming, and wherein the distinction between the characters and the final end to which they lead, under that of almsgiving or doing good to his necessitous disciples, and the contrary behaviour, saying, verses 31—46, When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me. Then shall the righteous

teous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink ; when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee, or in prison and came unto thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (chap. x, 40, 41, 42). Then shall he say unto them on his left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink. I was a stranger and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick and in prison, and did not minister unto thee ? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal.

That which led our Lord to say so much upon the subject of watchfulness, and of their discharging their obligations to him with fidelity during his absence, was what he had at times told them they would meet with in obeying his instructions, comprized principally under these particulars, 1st. their being liable to be seduced by false Christs, who, by making pretensions to the Messiahship, would deceive many, Matth. xxiv, 5, 23, 24, 25—28. Mark xiii, 5, 6, 21, 22, 23. Luke viii, 12—19, 2dly. The liability

bility they were under of being tempted to commit those crimes which would exclude them from his favour, and disqualify them for the work of the Apostleship, which by him in a special manner they were called to discharge with fidelity after his resurrection. Luke xxi, 34, 35, 36. 3dly. The uncertainty of the season when he would come again, which he then spoke of, Mat. xxiv, 36—41. Mark xiii, 32—37. Luke xxi, 27—33. Attending maturely to these particulars, will not only account for his speaking the several parables of nearly the same meaning, but also shew us plainly to whom they were primarily directed and addressed, the subject to which they relate, and also the reason why Jesus in so diversified a manner of expression repeated his advice and warning to them, as of very great consequence, not only to their own true interest, but also of great moment to their Lord's design in choosing them to be his heralds in spreading the Gospel after his death, which was then very near at hand, both to Jews and Gentiles.

Another parable, which he spake not long after the former, addressed to his Apostles, and in his primary intention respected them alone, is that of his being the vine, they as the branches, and his Father the husbandman, John xv, 1, 2. I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit. The explication of which, in his own words, is, I am the vine, and ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide

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not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

The primary and true foundation upon which, as it appears to me, Jesus entered into the conversation recorded, chapters xiii, 31—38, xiv, xv, xvi, xvii, is, that a little while after he spake the foregoing ones, was 1st, to fortify the minds of the Apostles against the shock he knew his death would occasion, owing to their apprehending that thereby all their fond hopes of advancement in his temporal kingdom would be utterly at an end. This in part at least was what occasioned that sorrow, he speaks of, they had upon his freely telling them he should go from them, and the cause why, but he assures them he should come again, and not then finally leave them at death. 2dly, To guard them against the effects of that persecution which he freely tells them, as before he had done, they would meet with, that they might not thereby be offended in him, i. e. forsake him and the Gospel, which they had embraced, and thereby recede from the Apostolical work. 'These things, saith he xvi, 1, 2, 3, 4, have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues (this the Jews had begun to do, ix, 22, 34,) yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service. And all these things will they do unto you, because they know not the father nor me. But these things I have told you, that when the time shall come ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. See Matth. x, 16, &c. 3dly.

To represent in general terms the work he designed them for after he had left them, viz. to preach the Gospel, and that their peculiar qualification for that important and arduous undertaking would be the Holy Spirit, whom he would in due time send to them, which should be to them a Comforter in his stead, and by whose revelations to them, and its miraculous effects in various ways, by their instrumentality, convince the world of sin, and confirming their doctrine and character as the servants of God. In perfect conformity with these great and truly interesting objects, Jesus had in view, relating to the high department these his Apostles were to sustain in his kingdom after his death, is his prayer to his Father at the conclusion of this most particular and pathetic conversation he had with them a very little time before his passion. In this view therefore of his conversing with the Apostles, I conceive that the parable, which is a part of it, principally if not wholly relates to them, and is designed to shew them the immediate and inseparable union and dependance they, as his Apostles, stood in to him for those powers and qualifications they needed to engage in, and successfully discharge their Apostolic office, when he had personally left them. For, saith he, with the utmost truth and propriety, Without me ye can do nothing. And on all occasions, while they abode in him, they were taught to ask what they would, and it should be done unto them. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye eminently in your Apostolic character be my disciples.

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In this, as the only true view of the parable, as it appears to me, there is a peculiar and most significant meaning, which tho' it includes their general character as his disciples, yet especially relates to, and is expressive of their apostolical one.

First, from the foregoing explanation of the parables Jesus spake, it is exceedingly evident and certain, that he had only one uniform design and end in speaking a parable, and which is contained for the most part in the context, as is to be found in all other speakers when they adopt figurative language, designing thereby to clothe and convey their meaning to others, and consequently we see with great clearness and certainty how groundless and unscriptural is the commonly received opinion in the present and past ages, embraced by them, that he has a natural and spiritual meaning in speaking them. And, indeed, if men plead for or admit more meanings in a parable than that one Jesus plainly intended to be contained in it, arising from the real occasion of its being delivered, it will open a door for almost endless meanings, and then a parable will have no determinate meaning at all, and then it will be impossible to fix what was our Lord's real intention in speaking any one which he delivered, and consequently render them wholly useless for instruction to us at this day. For if his true meaning is not ascertained, it is impossible that we can receive his instruction in it, and the only one we shall then be guided by, is the precarious explication given by men who may give only their own sense of the parable as his, and therefore while we suppose we are instructed and influenced by his

meaning, we are only directed by that of his mistaken interpreter. And, indeed, the admitting and pleading that our Lord hath a natural and spiritual meaning in a parable, has opened such a door for explaining them, that from hence has arose such an endless dissimilarity in the explication of a parable, that to men who have not abilities or leisure, and that is the case of the bulk of mankind, that they must for ever be left at the greatest uncertainty what is his meaning, or, in short, whether he has any determinate one at all, and consequently must reduce some of the most valuable parts of our Lord's instruction to so vague a state as to render them of little or no real use to us, at this day at least. Of so great consequence is it therefore to understand his primary and genuine intention in speaking a parable, which certainly composes a great part of the Evangelical history and of his instruction to the people who attended him.

2dly. Another consequence arising from the foregoing natural explication of our Saviour's parables is, that by that means we are enabled to enter into, and clearly understand the true grounds of the thread of the Evangelical history of his ministry in many, perhaps in most parts of it. This is an acquisition of great importance to every one who is desirous of entering into a view of the true state of things, as they took place at the time when they were delivered, and which are to be collected from the parables he spake. But if his intention in them is not understood, it is evident we shall at best be at a great uncertainty concerning those things, having no sure guide to enter into and prosecute with success so pleasing and useful an enquiry.

Whereas,

Whereas, in attaining a clear and certain understanding what he intended in a parable, we are prepared to discern with precision the true state of things, as well as the state of mind of those he conversed with, as what gave occasion to his speaking it, and therefore discern the true circumstances of things as tho' we were present at the time. This in my opinion is entering into the true spirit of sacred history, and tracing minutely every part of it, both as it respects his own mind or judgment and conduct, as well as that of others. And by this means we shall be able to see with much pleasure the consummate wisdom and prudence that marks out his conduct towards his enemies, and also towards his immediate disciples and others with whom he conversed; and we shall hereby be also led to apprehend the reasons why he so often spake in parables what he judged proper to say. But if an interpretation be given of any of them, or most of them, that is foreign from his intention, it will not only cast a cloud over the whole relation, but involve us in endless difficulties in reconciling what he has said with the context, or what gave occasion to his speaking a parable, and the thread of the sacred history; and which has been, and will continue to be improved by the enemies of the Christian Religion, as an objection to the sacred records, and also a reflection upon the superior wisdom of our great teacher. And it must be owned, to men already prejudiced against our most Holy Religion, as contained in Scripture, but who take their estimate of it from the erroneous and misguided explications given of it by some of its votaries, it is not much to be won-

dered at that they should think our Lord's parables not defensible by that standard they set up of judging concerning them, viz. that of reason, for it is certain that some of the interpretations given of some of them are not defensible upon that principle, either as displaying the admirable wisdom of the Speaker, or the propriety of them as corresponding to the occasion of their being delivered. But every objection of this kind must subside, upon the true meaning of a parable being fairly represented, in the same simplicity and propriety as they lie in the sacred writings themselves; and were they discerned by the persons above referred to in that light, they would find them supported and illustrated by their own touchstone, and I doubt not but they would be highly pleased with their native beauties and the wisdom that shines in the Author of them.

3dly. From the foregoing interpretation of our Lord's parables, we are led into the genuine reason or ground upon which he so often spake in parables. When he conversed with the Scribes and Pharisees, whose prejudices against him on many accounts ran very high, it was to conceal for the present or render doubtful his meaning, because had he spoke in plain language, as on some occasions he did, they would have been incensed more against him, and thereby more disinclined to embrace his doctrine, which he plainly saw at the time. This he saw would be unadvisable to excite in them. Herein he followed his own advice to his Apostles. Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they turn again and rent you. I have noted in several of the parables, when they perceived his meaning
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in them, the effect it produced in their minds, and the steps they would immediately have taken to seize and destroy him, had they not been awed by the indignation of the people, who on several accounts revered him as a prophet, and were in the hands of Divine Providence his protectors. He therefore in this way let the light of what he said to them sink by degrees into their minds, as they were able to bear it. And we all know by experience, that while mens minds are under the influence of strong prepossessions, talking to them in plain language of their own evil principle and conduct is on many occasions not the most adviseable, or likely to be attended with success. Thus Nathan, when speaking to David upon his conduct towards Uriah and Bathshe-ba, did not in plain language tell him the nature and aggravating circumstances of his guilt, but in a most natural and strikingly beautiful parable sets it before him in the most artless dress, to draw from him, without his being aware of his intention, an impartial confession of his sin ; in like manner as Jesus did from those persons he conversed with, sometimes by applying it to them, and at other times leaving the application to be made by themselves.

The primary ground or cause of their prejudices against him, as we have observed, arose from their being disappointed of his ascending, if he was the Messiah, the throne of his Father David and reigning over the House of Israel, and thereby delivering them from the bondage of a foreign yoke, joined with the frequent and open reproofs he gave them before the people, which they drew upon themselves ; and we may add, his obtaining so much esteem and reverence of
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the people, in which they saw the decline of their influence over them. We may add also, his curing persons on the Sabbath Day and many other incidental occurrences, like so many small streams, united in the general current to heighten their disesteem of him and strengthen their disinclination, candidly to weigh what he offered to them.

Not that Jesus always clothed his words in parabolical language, for sometimes he spake to those persons in great simplicity of speech, a remarkable instance of which we have, Luke xi, 37—54. See also Matth. xv, 1—20.

Upon our Lord's speaking the parable of the sower who went forth to sow, and some preceding ones in the foregoing chapter, the disciples asked him saying, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? His answer is, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. By attentively looking over the conversation that passed previous to the parable of the sower, contained in chapter xii, 15—45, of which that is a continuation, with those persons, we shall find it was directed immediately to the Scribes and Pharisees, and consequently, that the parables he delivered were spoken to them particularly, who attended on him with the multitude.

In reference to those persons, as I conceive, Jesus adds, For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand, and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear and not understand,
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and seeing ye shall see and not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and should be converted and I should heal them. See Mark iv, 33, 34. By looking back on the foregoing chapter, it appears highly probable what in part was that blindness, &c. these persons are here plainly accused with, namely, their conduct as mentioned verses 9—14, and 22, &c. of their intention to destroy him, because he had healed on the Sabbath day, and on his casting out a Demon, saying, he performed the miracle by Beelzebub the prince of Devils. See what he saith of them, verses 31—37, as expressive of what he intends in the text, just transcribed, of their not seeing, &c. Jesus having given sight to the man born blind as John ix, and which the Pharisees had endeavoured to represent as no miracle, or if it was, as he performed it on the Sabbath day, and thereby as they said brake it, he was a sinner, at the conclusion of the debate the blind man and he had with them, he saith, For judgement I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were present heard these words and said unto him, Are we blind also? i. e. we are not blind. He said unto them, if ye were (really) blind ye should have no sin (i. e. which for your outward unbelief you are chargeable with) but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth. It is here plain, that their blindness consisted in opposing the miracle; not from ignorance, but from a criminal prejudice

prejudice against him and his doctrine, and consequently was not an unavoidable error in judgment, but flowed from an inexcusable perverseness of will, and was that grossness of heart he had charged the persons with in the forecited text. Had they, as he said, been really blind, or knew no better than they acted towards him, they had not had sin; but as they saw and yet appeared to be blind, therefore their sin remained. Tho' he had done so many miracles amongst them, yet they believed not on him. See chap. xii, 37—41. Concerning this same kind of blindness amongst the Jews, Paul, at the conclusion of his discourse with some of them at Rome, who were not wrought upon to own their belief of the Gospel he preached to them, saith, Well spake the Holy Ghost by the prophet Isaias unto our fathers; saying, Go unto this people and say, hearing ye shall hear and not understand, &c. Opposite to the blindness Jesus had charged the Pharisees with in the text under consideration, he saith of the Apostles, But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. That is, you are willing or disposed to be informed or instructed by me into the truths I teach, and as a proof of it, you have become my disciples, and attend on my preaching to receive farther knowledge of the Gospel. For that they did not see, i. e. understand his true meaning in many of his parables is plain, several instances of which appear in the chapter we are now attending to, because they asked him to explain them. So that their seeing and hearing, as opposed to the want of it and the grossness of heart charged upon the other persons, principally consisted in their disposition to hear and receive his instructions;

instructions ; which the others, by reason of their unjustifiable prejudices, did not, and therefore would not be converted by him, that he might heal them of those moral and spiritual disorders they laboured under. See also Rom. ix, 7—25.

Under this particular I may add, that another reason or cause which led Jesus to speak in parables, was to prevent what he said concerning himself as sent of God, or that he was the Messiah, being interpreted into a declaration by the people, as his assertion that he was the person, and therefore that he was he whom they looked for as the King of Israel. A remarkable instance of this appears in the parable of his being the bread of God which came down from heaven, in which chapter it is plain that the amount of all he says is expressed in Peter's words, tho' ambiguously, Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, or the Christ of God. The day before he had fed about five thousand people with a few loaves and fishes ; upon seeing which miracle they would have taken him and made him a King, had he not retired out of their way, John vi, 5, &c.

Thus frequently, when he was asked by the Pharisees and others to shew them a sign from heaven, i. e. such a one as would prove to them he was the Messiah whom they looked for ; but he, instead of saying he was the Messiah, propounded to them those parables, which, tho' they asserted he was the person, yet his words could not be easily interpreted that he had said it. And this prudential caution appears most expedient for him to observe, from what passed at his trial, both before the high priest, the council, and

and Pilate, as must be seen by every one who attends thereto.

4thly. Another reason or cause why he spake in parables to his disciples, as well as to others, was for a similar end, viz. in part to conceal for the present his intention, or to let in the light to their minds as they were able to bear it. For tho' they had no prejudices against him, as not the true Messiah, yet they had strong prepossessions in favour of his temporal kingdom, and which he saw it meet, while he was with them, at times, to adapt his language to those fond hopes they were unwilling to have suppressed or extinguished; and therefore he chose to express himself in that kind of language, which, while it conveyed his true meaning, it was capable of being interpreted by them in favour of their own opinion of a temporal kingdom. How else shall we account for his speaking of the Gospel as a kingdom, and their setting on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and that which corresponds herewith is his plainly countenancing his disciples and others proclaiming him into Jerusalem itself the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord; If, saith he on the occasion, these should hold their peace the stones would cry out, and that it was written and now exemplified, that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise. The time when he was to open, explain and apply the plain prophecies that predicted him and the Gospel, as they understood it after the descent of the holy Ghost upon them, was not during his ministry, but left for the time after his resurrection, when would be a more seasonable opportunity to disclose what he well knew would

would not be received cordially before. And in his last conversation he had with them, John xvi, being upon the subject of his going from them, he saith, I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Indeed, there were times and occasions in which he spake plainly to them concerning the Gospel of the kingdom, and that he must leave them by suffering death; but it is plain from the Evangelists that they understood very little of his true meaning in such expressions, owing very much to those expectations they had of his temporal kingdom and the glories of it, in which they expected to share largely. From the foregoing explication of the parables Jesus spake, we are able in a great measure to judge of the opinion the Scribes and Pharisees had of Jesus, and the true causes of it, and from whence they were led to converse so often with him; and likewise his opinion of them both, as to their principle and conduct, which he failed not with great freedom to represent and censure. Their ends in conversing with him were to ensnare him, thereby to draw from him what they could improve against him to deliver him up to the power and authority of the Governor, and to render him odious to the people, and by that means lose their esteem in proportion. With this view, they embraced all seasons, and used every stratagem to accomplish their designs, which as he well knew, he was always prepared to give them a proper answer, and frequently to retort upon them their own designs, by exposing their perfidy and wickedness to the people, which frequently stung them to the heart and increased their resentment against him. As it was principally conducted by the Scribes and Pharisees,

Pharisees; so we see the true reason why he saith so much, and is so pointed in his strictures on them, more than against any other particular persons.

5th. From the foregoing representation of our Saviour's parables, we plainly observe he had no special intention that every minute part of a parable should correspond, or exactly tally with the occasion and design of his speaking it, but only that the main parts of it should represent, or be descriptive of his real meaning, and thereby convey it to those of his hearers who were disposed to understand what he said, or who afterwards were inclined to discover his meaning in it in like manner as all other speakers, who clothe their thoughts in figurative language. Hereby we plainly discern how puerile and unsuccessful is that labour many have taken in explaining a parable, to make every minute part, like the different colours in Joseph's coat, to have some distinct and particular meaning, which the Speaker never intended in delivering it, and which, instead of casting light upon it, or the context, has involved it in great uncertainty and darkness.— And how much of this kind of interpretation of parables has been palmed upon the Christian world by expositors, and called spiritualizing them, the works of Polemical writers in every age abounds with manifest proofs of, and which has had, and continues to have men, even in this uncommon age of light, its votaries and defenders. And this vague and uncertain method of interpreting them will continue, while men in their examination into those parts of the Evangelical writings are governed more by the prejudices of education, or great names, or both, than
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by a desire of seeing them in that natural and beautiful light in which they were at first delivered, and are related by the sacred historian, as hath been already stated.

From hence we may easily account for the multiplied and varied interpretations which men have given, and still give, of Jesus's parables; some of them flatly contradictory to each other and utterly unsupported by the occasion of their being spoken, and consequently inconsistent with, or at least wide of the intention of the speaker. This is verified in the explication given of what is usually called the parable of the prodigal son; concerning which, the father is explained to mean God, and the spendthrift son the Gentiles; whereas, neither of those senses are what the Speaker intended, as hath been made appear. When men therefore give their opinion of a parable grounded upon such a sandy foundation, it is no wonder they should run into wild and contradictory interpretations. Here we plainly see what a capacious field a fertile imagination, with the assistance of a similar one, has to display itself in such thoughts and conjectures of the meaning of the several parts of a parable, as is superior to that of the Speaker, and unnecessarily attempts supplying his defects. But this is not speaking in the words of truth and soberness, but is the rant of a raving or crude injudicious mind, not thoroughly versed in the true spirit of Evangelical History.

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